**NAVY SEALS:** ORIGINS OF AMERICA'S ELITE FORCE

# HISTORY of WAR

**"THEY FOUGHT LIKE TIGERS"**
VETERAN'S MEMORIES OF IMJIN RIVER

**HMS WARRIOR**
ON BOARD THE NAVY'S IRON-CLAD FRIGATE

**PLUS:**
- Fishguard invasion
- Seven Years' War
- General Wolfe

**BAEDEKER BLITZ**
Hitler's holiday tour from Hell

## FORGING THE IRON DUKE
# WELLINGTON

Uncover the genius tactics & strategies behind Britain's greatest battlefield commander


**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**
STEP INSIDE THE CHAOS OF GERMANY'S FINAL WWI OFFENSIVE

**D-DAY'S VC HERO**
HOW STANLEY HOLLIS STORMED GOLD BEACH

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IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS

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# Welcome

**"In this age, in past ages, in any age, Napoleon!"**

– Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, on being asked whom he thought was the greatest soldier of the age

He led Britain's armies across the world, from India to the Iberian Peninsula, and dealt the final defeat to *le petit caporal* himself, Napoleon. However, was Wellington really the greatest general Britain has ever seen?

This issue's cover feature explores the full military career of the Iron Duke, from his origins serving in India and the Netherlands, to his gruelling campaign in Spain and Portugal.

Starting on page 28, Dr Huw Davies and Dr Rory Muir discuss the strategic successes and fatal mistakes that helped shape the generalship of Wellington, and how his battlefield brilliance reaffirmed Britain as a force to be reckoned with in continental Europe.

**Tim Williamson**
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## CONTRIBUTORS

**TOM GARNER**
This issue Tom spoke with Korean War veteran Tommy Clough for his Great Battles feature on Imjin River(page 46). He also managed to track down two Napoleonic scholars for his cover feature on Old Nosey, aka the Duke of Wellington! (page 28).

**ROBIN SCHÄFER**
Back for another issue, this time researcher and historian Rob takes a look at Ludendorff's final throw of the dice in the Spring Offensive, 1918. Discover just what made it so successful, but why it ultimately failed (page 40).

**NICK SOLDINGER**
Refusing to let the British summer depress him too much, this month Nick has been investigating the Baedeker Blitz, when Hitler's Luftwaffe wrought destructive vengeance on Britain's most picturesque cities (page 84).

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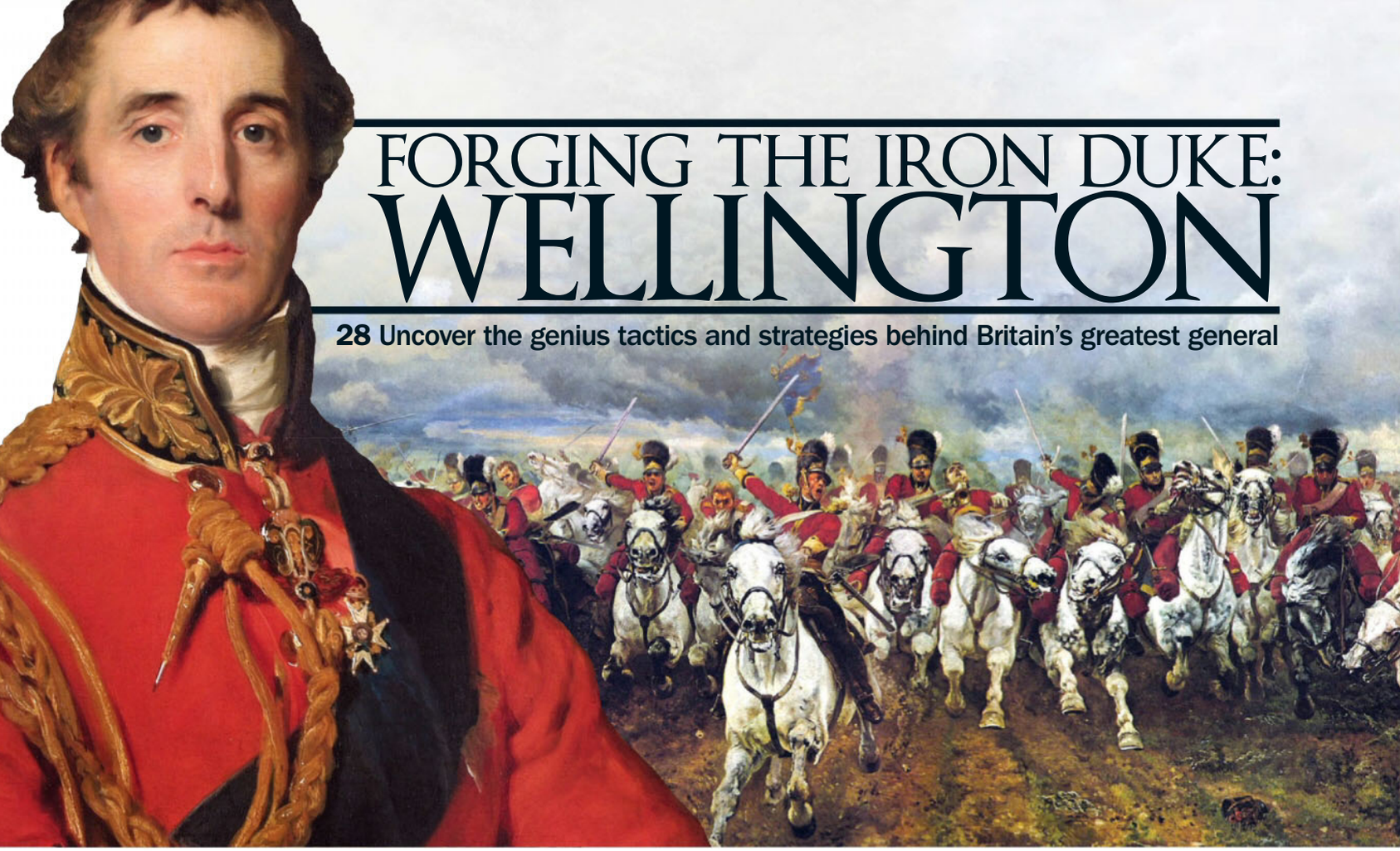
*British infantry desperately hold off a French attack at Quatre Bras, fought two days before Waterloo*



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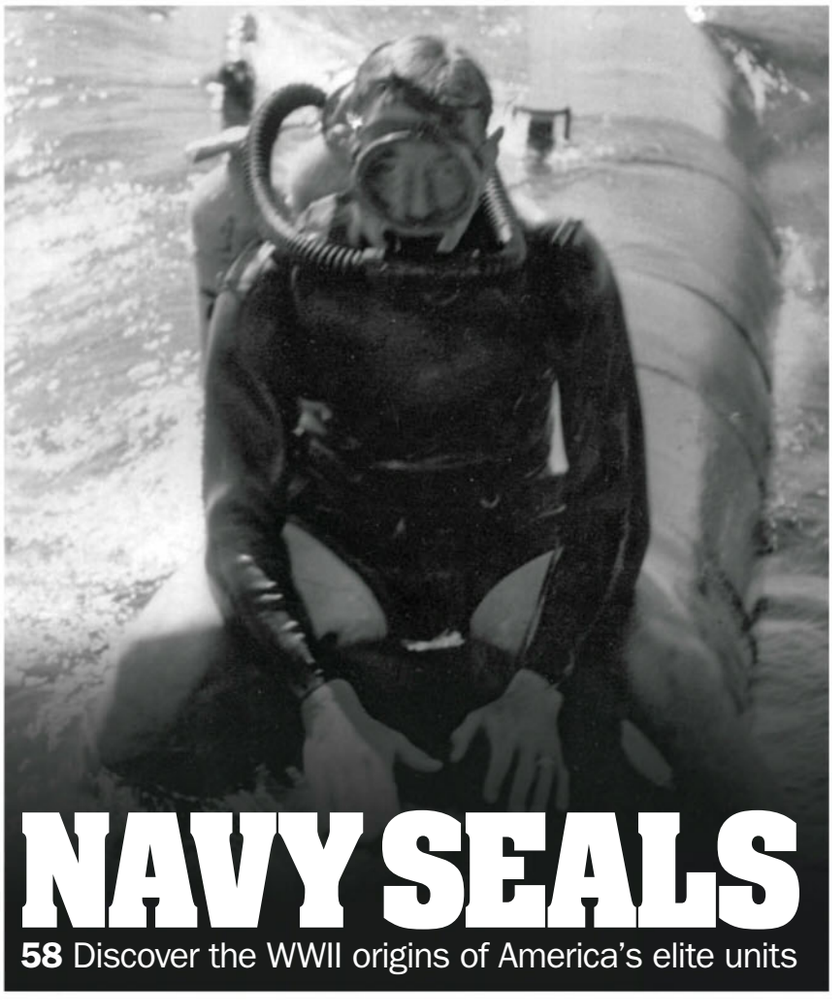

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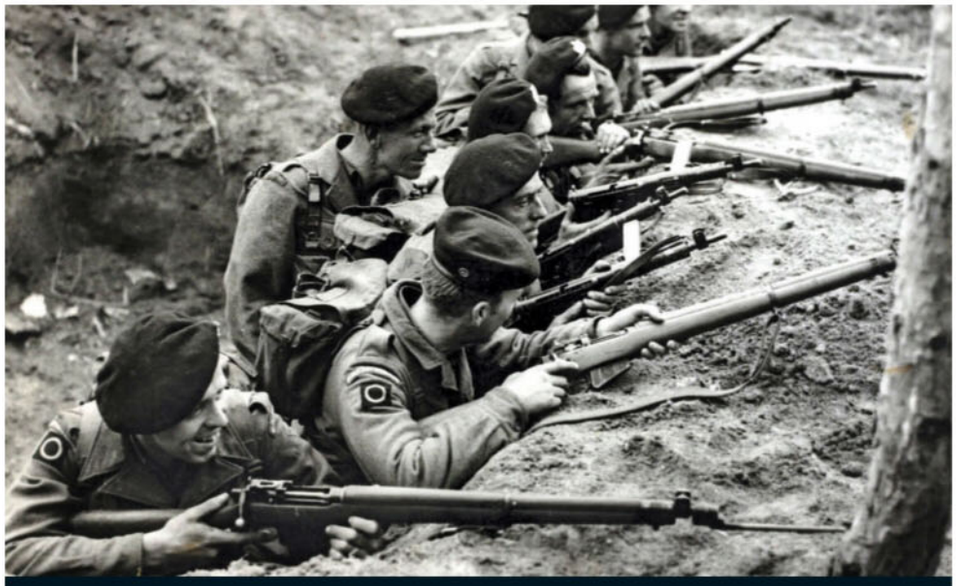

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# BLOOD, OIL & ANGOLA

**78** From Cold War proxy, to anarchic failed state

WAR in FOCUS

## COALITION

*Taken:* ***October 2015***

Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Regiment, US Army, provide fire support for Royal Engineers in Afghanistan. Taken by Sergeant Rupert Frere, Royal Logistics Corps, it's part of a series that won Best Professional Operation Herrick Portfolio in 2015's Army Photographic Competition.

WAR in FOCUS

## FORTRESS BUILDING

*Taken:* ***October 1942***

Workers install fixtures into the tail fuselage of a B-17F bomber at a Douglas Aircraft Company factory, Long Beach, California. Over 3,400 F variants of the famous Flying Fortress were built during WWII and became among the most iconic heavy bombers in the United States Air Force, as well as the RAF.


ASSEMBLY

WAR in FOCUS

## KUKRI DIPLOMACY

*Taken:* ***c. 1944***

A Gurkha attached to the British 8th Army emerges from an enemy foxhole clutching his kukri. This photo is from the Ortona sector, on the Adriatic coastline and part of the Winter Line designed to defend the western portion of Italy from the Allied troops. Ortona itself has been dubbed 'Italy's Stalingrad'.

WAR in FOCUS

## THE BATTLE OF MARCIANO

*Painted:* ***c. 1570-71***

This battle was one of the pivotal encounters between the allies of Habsburg Spain and Valois France, during the Italian War (1551-59). This war saw the two powers of France and Spain contest for dominance over the Italian peninsula, then made up of several powerful city states, including the Papal States.

Frontline

# SEVEN YEARS' WAR

With fighting around the globe, in Europe, India, North America and the West Indies, this has been described as the first world war

## BATTLE OF THE MONONGAHELA

Britain's response to French provocation results in 'Braddock's Defeat', the near annihilation of an army sent to reclaim Fort Duquesne. Major General Edward Braddock loses his life, along with more than 450 of his men.

1753 — 9 July 1755 — 29 August 1756 — November 1756

## THE FRENCH BUILD-UP

As part of its strategy of containing Britain's North American colonies against the eastern seaboard, France builds a string of forts in the Ohio river valley to prevent westward expansion.

***Below:** Fort Duquesne, originally called Fort Prince George and started by Virginia colonists, was taken over and completed by the French in 1754*

## PRUSSIA INVADES

Frederick the Great launches a pre-emptive invasion of Saxony at the head of 70,000 men. Following years of intrigue, political wrangling and rising tensions, the Seven Years' War has officially begun.

***Below:** The opening land battle of the war, at Lobositz, saw Prussian forces pushed back into Saxony by Austria*

## COMETH THE HOUR...

William Pitt the Elder takes the reins in Parliament and one of the nation's most famous war leaders is soon on course for a stunning victory.

***Right:** Following three years of failure and setbacks, mostly in North America, Pitt instilled new vigour into the British war effort*

*A young George Washington gets some valuable experience at the Battle of the Monongahela, helping to organise a rearguard action*

## "BRITAIN'S CHURCH BELLS WERE WORN OUT WITH RINGING FOR THE VICTORIES"

*British triumphs included the capture of ten ships of the line from the Spanish fleet at Havana, in 1762*

## THE FIRST BRITISH EMPIRE

**Britain emerges as the unequivocal winner of the war (although Prussia and Russia are established as 'great powers'), while French footholds in both North America and India are destroyed.**

## THE ANNUS MIRABILIS

**Britain enjoys a remarkable string of successes in Europe, North America and India, leading Horace Walpole to declare that Britain's church bells were worn out with ringing for the victories.**

***Below:** The French are defeated by an Anglo-Hanoverian army at Minden in 1759, part of Britain's 'year of miracles'*

1759

5 November 1757

1763

January 1762

## BATTLE OF ROSSBACH

**Possibly the most important battle of the European theatre. Frederick the Great leads a small army against a much bigger Franco-Austrian force and secures a decisive victory, badly shaking French confidence and prestige.**

## DEATH OF THE EMPRESS

**Prussia's grim struggle for survival is made easier following the death of the Russian Empress Elizabeth, and her replacement by the pro-Prussian Peter III, who promptly organises a peace treaty between Prussia and Russia.**

***Left:** Peter III offered the Prussians a corps of 12,000 Russian soldiers to complete the miraculous transition from enemy to ally*

*Images: Getty*

# EUROPE'S BELLIGERENTS

Multiple nations featured in what was arguably the first world war – and each country had its own objectives

## 1 GREAT BRITAIN 1754-1763

Britain was engaging with French forces in North America several years before the Seven Years' War officially started. When it did, Britain effectively mixed support of Prussia in Europe (both in the form of financial aid and a military presence on the continent) and conflict with France overseas, emerging as the owners of the first British Empire.

## 2 PRUSSIA 1756-1763

Friction with Austria over Prussian occupation of Silesia following the War of the Austrian Succession made another war inevitable and Prussia chose to take the fight to its enemies by opening hostilities with an invasion of Saxony. The war then became a hair-raising, but ultimately successful struggle to preserve the Prussian state against overwhelming French, Austrian and Russian forces.

***Above:*** *The Prussian Army had a reputation for discipline and precision*

## 3 FRANCE 1754-1763

The undoubted 'loser' of the war, France found itself unable to resist British aggression in North America and India and was unable to crush the Prussians in Europe. Ending the war saddled with debt and with its military humiliated, it was firmly on course for the French Revolution at the end of the century.

**"FRANCE FOUND ITSELF UNABLE TO RESIST BRITISH AGGRESSION IN NORTH AMERICA AND INDIA AND WAS UNABLE TO CRUSH THE PRUSSIANS IN EUROPE"**

***Right:*** *Under the command of Ferdinand of Brunswick, Hanoverian troops played an important role throughout the war*

**HANOVER 1757-1763**
TEMPORARILY KNOCKED OUT OF THE WAR EARLY ON, AFTER DEFEAT AT HASTENBECK, THE HANOVERIANS REGROUPED AND FOUGHT ON AS PART OF 'HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S ARMY IN GERMANY'

1

3

**SPAIN 1762-1763**
A LATECOMER TO THE PARTY, SPAIN WAS CONCERNED THAT BRITISH VICTORY IN THE WAR MIGHT THREATEN ITS OWN OVERSEAS COLONIES, BUT ITS INTERVENTION WAS INEFFECTIVE

***Right:*** *Wilhelm, Count of Schaumburg-Lippe, commander of the Anglo-Portuguese force that brilliantly defended Portugal*

**PORTUGAL 1762-1763**
SPAIN AGREED TO INVADE PORTUGAL ON JOINING THE WAR, IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISTRACT THE BRITISH, BUT PORTUGUESE AND BRITISH FORCES SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THE COUNTRY AGAINST THE FRANCO-SPANISH THREAT

Above: The Austrians inflicted a crushing defeat on the Prussians at Kolin

**SWEDEN 1757-1763**
ONCE A GREAT MILITARY POWER BUT BY NOW CLEARLY IN DECLINE, THE SWEDES PLAYED A LIMITED ROLE, HOPING FOR A QUICK WAR AND A SUITABLE REWARD FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT

**SAXONY 1756-1763**
PRUSSIA'S PRE-EMPTIVE INVASION IN 1756 (WHICH OFFICIALLY STARTED THE WAR IN EUROPE) ALLOWED FREDERICK THE GREAT TO ABSORB THE ARMY OF SAXONY

## 4 AUSTRIA 1757–1763

The Austrians had always planned to get Silesia back from the Prussians, but would need help. A stunning treaty with France (they had been enemies for the previous 250 years), with Russia joining the following year, promised great things, but Austria was ultimately unsuccessful in its war aims.

## 5 RUSSIA 1757–1763

The main Russian aim of the war, the destruction of Prussia, seemed possible until a change of monarch (Peter III replacing the deceased Elizabeth), turned the Russians' world on its head. In 1762, Peter III concluded a treaty with the Prussians and offered his hero, Frederick the Great, a corps of Russian soldiers.

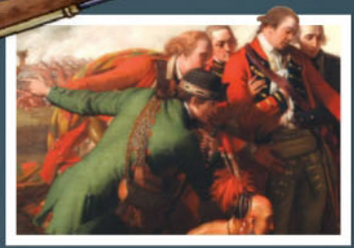
Frederick the Great with his men at the Battle of Zorndorf in 1758

**"IN 1762 PETER III CONCLUDED A TREATY WITH THE PRUSSIANS AND OFFERED HIS HERO, FREDERICK THE GREAT, A CORPS OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS"**

Images: Alamy, FreeVectorMaps.com

# HEAD TO HEAD

Traditional battlefields were scarce in the rugged terrain of North America, so much of the fighting was undertaken by light infantry units between the lines



***Right:** William Howe, in light infantry dress, makes a dramatic appearance in 'The Death of General Wolfe', by Benjamin West*

## WHEN DISCIPLINE TRUMPS EXPERIENCE

The first official light infantry unit in the British Army, the 80th Foot, was raised by Colonel Thomas Gage at the end of 1757. The unit's most famous commanding officer, George Augustus Howe, was the oldest brother of Richard and William Howe who later commanded British forces in the American War of Independence. The elder Howe was a recognised light infantry expert who lost his life during the assault on Fort Ticonderoga, in July 1758, while William, also a light infantry specialist, was conspicuous at Québec the following year.

## BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRYMAN

***YEARS IN OPERATION:** 1757-1763 **LOYALTY:** GREAT BRITAIN*

### EXPERIENCE

Light infantry units were only formed after the start of the war, and the converted regulars were initially at a disadvantage in terms of experience – but they were selected for their intelligence and learned fast.

### UNIFORM

The cumbersome regulation uniform was adapted for the 'bushfight', with the long coat discarded and a more suitable colour-scheme employed. A tough leather cap was used, as well as Native moccasins and leggings.

### ARMAMENT

British light infantry made use of many of the same weapons as the irregular Native American forces opposing them, but also wielded a carbine that was both shorter and lighter than the standard musket.

### MOTIVATION

The light infantry were resourceful and quick-witted and developed a strong esprit de corps, viewing themselves as the elite troops of the army. They also had a burning desire to avenge Native atrocities.

### DISCIPLINE

Hand-picked from the regular ranks, the lights had a tradition of iron discipline to fall back on, although more initiative was allowed and, indeed, encouraged in their new role.

### TOTAL

*Above: French officers attempt to stop the Natives' assault on the terrified survivors of Fort William Henry*

## KNOWLEDGE EQUALS POWER

The differences in motivation and discipline between native troops and European regulars led to many misunderstandings. European officers who took the time to get to know their allies (the French were always better at this than the British) learned to respect the customs of the Native Americans, but even among the French there was distaste for the Natives' relish for plunder and torture. This was most clearly manifested in the massacre of the garrison of Fort William Henry, when Native forces simply could not understand why a defeated foe was being allowed to escape unmolested.

## NATIVE AMERICAN WARRIOR

***YEARS IN OPERATION:*** *1754-1763* ***LOYALTY:*** *FRANCE*

### EXPERIENCE

The Native American warriors who fought as allies of the French were schooled in the arts of living and hunting in the forests of North America from an early age.

### UNIFORM

With their own dress perfectly suited to their habitat, the Native Americans also adopted many items of Western clothing, including shirts.

### ARMAMENT

Experts with indigenous weapons like the tomahawk, the Native warriors also made use of Western firearms and were skilled at utilising cover while fighting.

### MOTIVATION

Native warriors were interested in glory and the spoils of war, if neither was on offer they would quickly lose interest. Critically, they had to agree to a battle plan to take part in it.

### DISCIPLINE

To uneducated European eyes, the discipline of Native American warriors was poor, but they adhered to their own code of engagement and honour, which emphasised the avoidance of casualties.

### TOTAL

*Illustrations: Jean-Michel Girard / The Art Agency*

# LEADERS & COMMANDERS

Generals and statesmen from across Europe clashed on the battlefield and across the negotiating table

## FERDINAND OF BRUNSWICK

### 1721-1792 BRUNSWICK

### THE SAVIOUR OF HANOVER

Ferdinand, Prince of Brunswick, started his military career in the Prussian Army in 1740 and became a friend of Frederick the Great. He got off to a flying start in the Seven Years' War, commanding one of the Prussian columns during the pre-emptive invasion of Saxony in 1756, but it was in his role in the defence of Hanover that he really came to prominence.

As Elector of Hanover, as well as the British monarch, George II understandably saw the defence of the small German state to be a matter of great importance, but it also had strategic significance, as French occupation of Hanover would threaten Prussia's western flank. A composite army comprising troops from Hanover, Hesse, Brunswick, Prussia and Saxe-Gotha was formed, paid for by Britain and dubbed the 'Army of Observation', but it was defeated at the Battle of Hastenbeck on 26 July 1757. The resulting Convention of Kloster Zeven allowed for French occupation of Hanover and the demobilisation of the army, so Britain decided to simply ignore the convention and re-form the army. Renamed 'His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany', it now included British troops and was commanded by Ferdinand.

The Prince proved his worth in reinvigorating the army and then launching a six-week campaign that drove the French out of Hanover with significant losses (an estimated 16,000 compared to just 200 for Ferdinand's army).

As well as securing Prussia's western flank, the success of Prince Ferdinand kept large numbers of French troops occupied and prevented Hanover from becoming a bargaining chip at the inevitable negotiations that would end the war.

Ferdinand's greatest triumph came at Minden, on 1 August 1759. Just six weeks before James Wolfe won Canada for Britain at Québec, Ferdinand repulsed a French army to secure Hanover and add his own chapter to Britain's 'Annus Mirabilis'.

*Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel shown in his robe of the Order of the Garter*

*Schoolboy looks belied the iron determination of Wolfe*

## JAMES WOLFE 1727-1759 BRITAIN

### HEROIC ARCHITECT OF THE 1ST BRITISH EMPIRE

**Unprepossessing in looks, with a weak chin and slender frame, Wolfe was nevertheless a fierce disciplinarian who was carving out a brilliant career in the North American theatre of the Seven Years' War at the time of his death.**

**His fine performance as second-in-command during the capture of Louisbourg was enough to win him overall command of the force sent to take Québec, which he did stunningly at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.**

**The most celebrated British general of the day, he was a romantic at heart and once declared that authorship of Gray's 'Elegy' would have given him more pleasure than the fall of Québec. He was given no time to reconsider, receiving a fatal wound during the battle that won Canada for Britain. Dying on the battlefield always attracts attention, and Wolfe is usually mentioned as a candidate in the debate over Britain's greatest general.**

**"HIS FINE PERFORMANCE AS SECOND-IN-COMMAND DURING THE CAPTURE OF LOUISBOURG WAS ENOUGH TO WIN HIM OVERALL COMMAND OF THE FORCE SENT TO TAKE QUÉBEC, WHICH HE DID STUNNINGLY AT THE BATTLE OF THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM"**

# MARQUIS LOUIS-JOSEPH DE MONTCALM

## 1712-1759 FRANCE

### TRAGIC FALL-GUY OF QUÉBEC

One of France's most successful commanders during the war, Montcalm shared the fate of Wolfe, dying during the battle for Québec in 1759. Unfortunately for Montcalm, he died in a losing effort, which removed much of the lustre from his sacrificial act.

An experienced commander following service in the War of the Austrian Succession, Montcalm was sent to North America in 1756 to defend French possessions. He did well for several years (most notably during the defence of Fort Carillon against a much greater British force), but Britain's ability to reinforce the region, while preventing the French from doing so, gradually drained his fighting ability. By the time British forces under Wolfe moved on Québec, Montcalm was a nervy figure that rushed into battle rather than awaiting reinforcements. The decision cost him his life, and cost the French Canada.

***Above:** An urbane and cultured man, Montcalm shared Wolfe's fate at Québec*

**"HE DIED IN A LOSING EFFORT, WHICH REMOVED MUCH OF THE LUSTRE FROM HIS SACRIFICIAL ACT"**

# COUNT LEOPOLD JOSEPH VON DAUN

## 1705-1766 AUSTRIA

### CAREER SOLDIER WITH AN OVERLY CAUTIOUS STREAK

Von Daun wasted no time in embarking on his military career, getting his first taste of service at the age of 13, and by the time the Seven Years' War erupted he had almost 40 years' experience under his belt. He needed all of it when facing the Prussians early in 1757. Frederick the Great was looking to knock the Austrians out of the war with an invasion of Bohemia, but at the Battle of Kolín, von Daun's men stood firm, surprising the Prussian commander who had been expecting the familiar story of Austrian mediocrity. Instead, he had met a highly capably commander who had anticipated that the Prussians would attack the Austrians' right flank.

Defence was von Daun's strongest card and he received criticism, both at the time and since, for his caution. This caused tension in his relationship with the Russians, who felt he wasn't shouldering his fair share of the burden.

*Overly cautious at times, von Daun was still a formidable adversary who pushed Prussia to its limits*

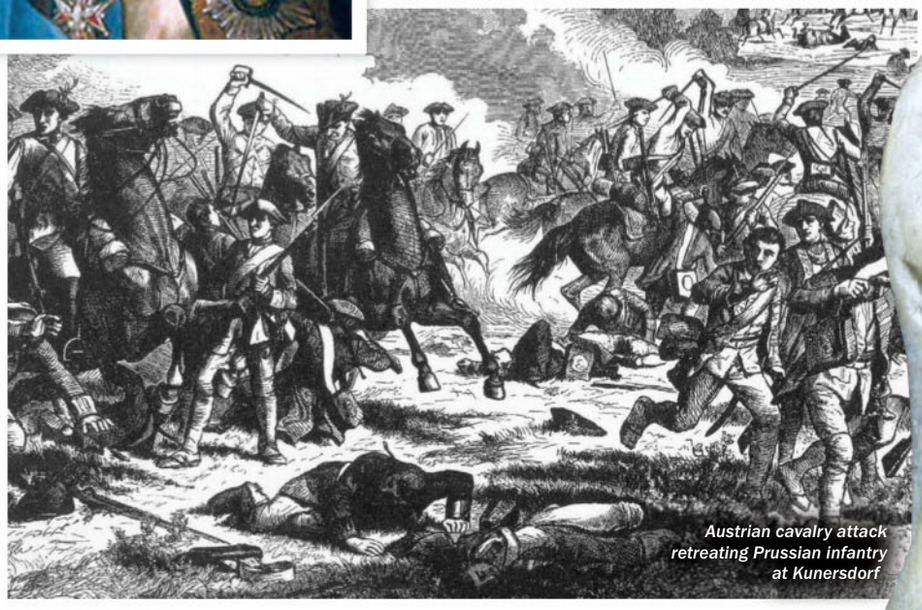
# PYOTR SEMENOVICH SALTYKOV

## C.1697-1772 RUSSIA

### RUSSIA'S GREATEST COMMANDER OF THE WAR

Educated in France, Saltykov was commander-in-chief of the Russian Army during the Seven Years' War. In the summer of 1759, the event Frederick the Great had worked so hard to avoid came to pass – the unification of Russian and Austrian forces. Saltykov, at the head of a Russian army, defeated a Prussian corps at Paltzig, clearing the way for his 50,000 men to join with 20,000 Austrians.

Alarmed, Frederick the Great marched with reinforcements to join up with the defeated corps and met the combined Russo-Austrian army at Kunersdorf. Saltykov was understandably concerned that the hard-marching Prussians might catch his army on the move, so he dug into a strong defensive position and invited the Prussians to attack. On 12 August they did just that, but Saltykov's position had been so well chosen that the Prussians could find no way through and suffered huge losses in the most serious defeat of the war for Frederick the Great.



*Austrian cavalry attack retreating Prussian infantry at Kunersdorf*

# THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

On the morning of 13 September 1759, two armies met on a plain above Québec, Canada, to decide the fate of the country

By 1759 the war had been going badly for the British, with the French seizing the initiative in the early years. It is understandable, therefore, that when King George II found an effective general, in James Wolfe, he pinned his hopes on him. Dismissing mutterings that Wolfe was reckless, he famously declared: 'Oh! He is mad, is he? Then I wish he would bite some other of my generals.'

Wolfe helped to transform British fortunes and mounted a concerted effort to pry the French out of Québec. If the Marquis de Montcalm's army could be defeated, Canada would fall into British hands.

**"OH! HE IS MAD, IS HE? THEN I WISH HE WOULD BITE SOME OTHER OF MY GENERALS"**

### 1. THE FOULON ROAD

Wolfe's plan calls for the British light infantry to seize control of the Foulon Road to allow the main army to reach the Plains of Abraham, but the army lands further downstream than intended, putting the entire plan in jeopardy.

### 2. THE CLIFFSIDE PATH

Around 4am, Colonel William Howe, commanding the light infantry, sends men back along the shoreline to look for the road, while taking the bold decision of leading three companies up a treacherous cliffside path.

### 3. THE FRENCH PIQUET FALLS

Howe's men attack the French piquet guarding the Foulon Road from behind, securing the route to the Plains of Abraham for the rest of the British army, which quickly advances up the Foulon Road.

### 4. TAKING THE SAMOS BATTERY

A potentially troublesome French artillery position is also captured by the British light infantry, who then spread out to secure the rear of Wolfe's army as it takes positions along the clifftop.

### 5. THE MARCH TO THE PLAINS

With the French response slower than expected, Wolfe takes the opportunity to march his men onto the Plains of Abraham, where they form up in line at about 6am. The arrival of more men allows him to strengthen his position.

### 6. THE FRENCH ARRIVE

The French commander, the Marquis de Montcalm, sees no alternative but to offer battle on the Plains of Abraham and marches his army out to meet the British, with Canadian militia lapping around the left flank of the British line.

### 7. MONTCALM ATTACKS

Seeing that the British have manhandled two brass cannon onto the plains, fearing that they are entrenching and will soon be too formidable to assault, Montcalm takes the decision to advance at 10am.

### 8. OPENING SHOTS

The advancing French indulge in scattered and ineffectual fire, while the British wings fire with more effect on the advancing columns. However, the British centre – made up of the 43rd and 47th Foot – reserve their fire until the French are within 37 metres.

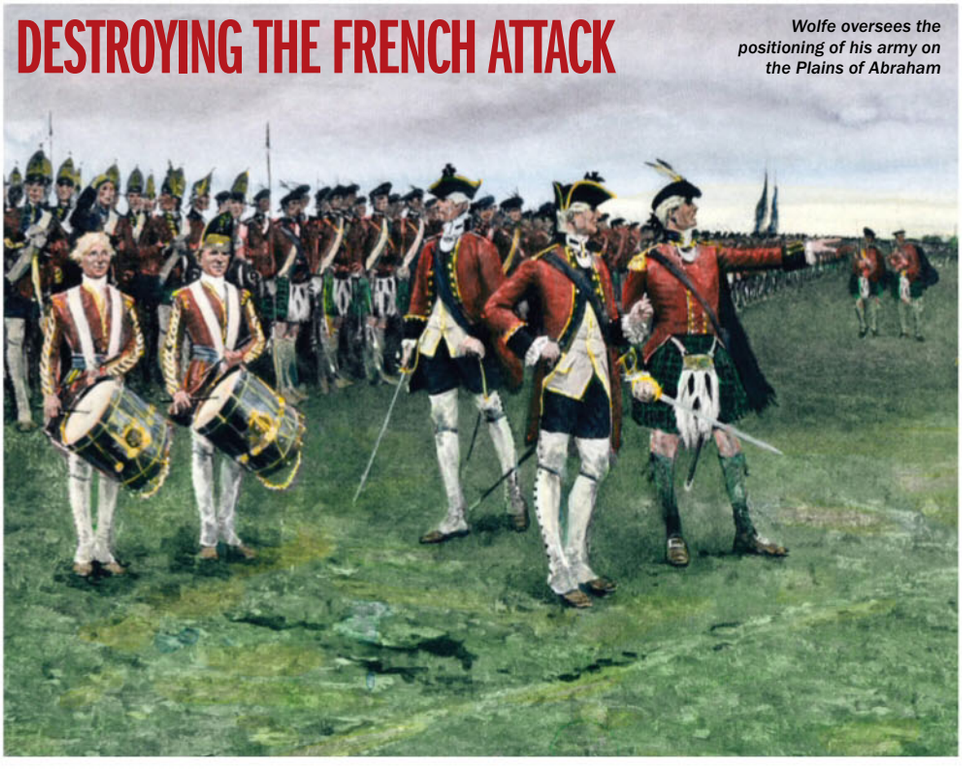
### 9. THE DEATH OF WOLFE

Trying to find a position from where he can effectively observe the battle, Wolfe is exposed to French fire and is shot through the chest. He lives long enough to learn that his men have won the day.

### 10. THE VOLLEY

Around 450 redcoats of the 43rd and 47th Regiments unleash a devastating volley upon the advancing French, breaking them completely. The battle is effectively over, but both Wolfe and Montcalm have been fatally wounded.

## DESTROYING THE FRENCH ATTACK



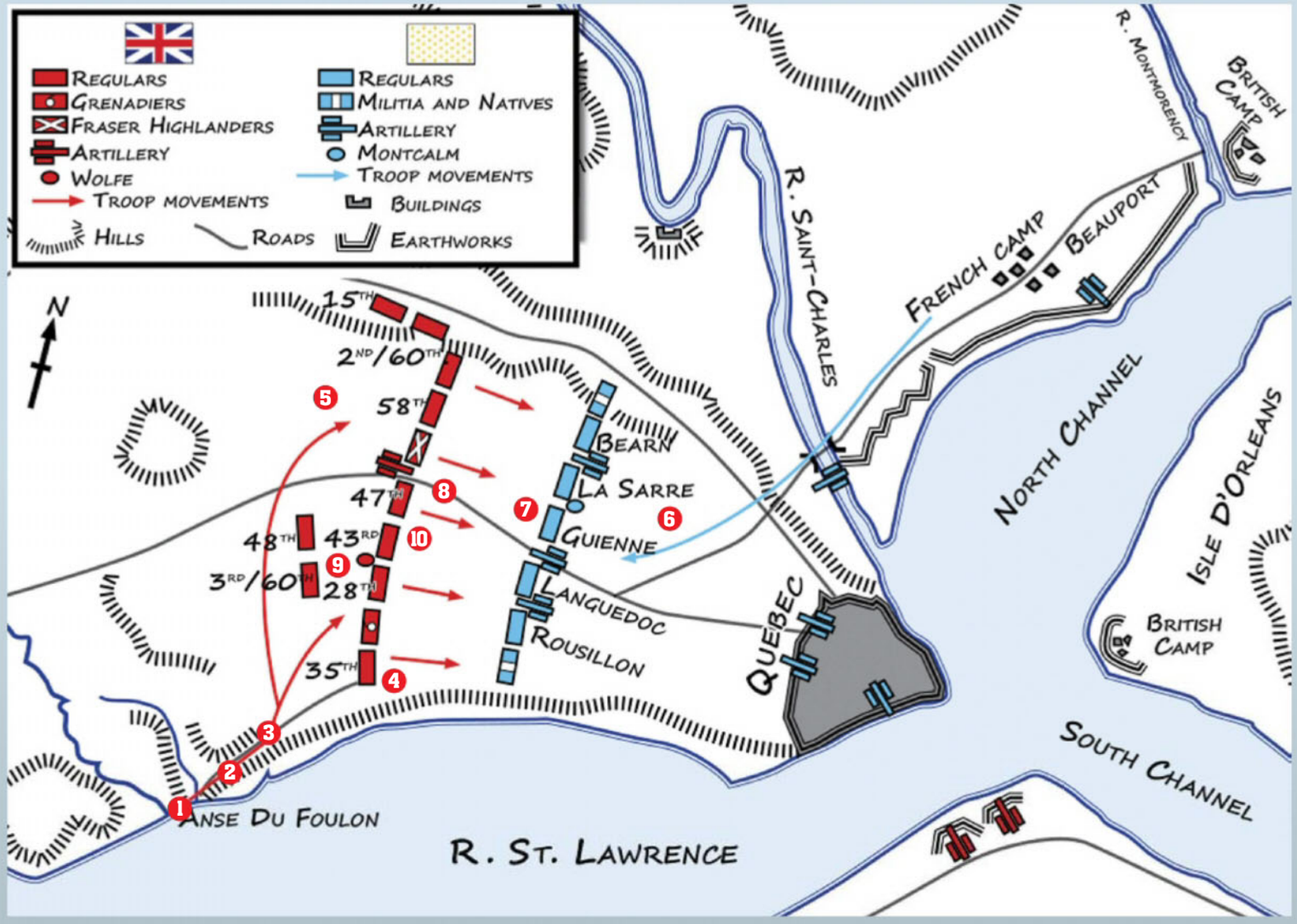
*Wolfe oversees the positioning of his army on the Plains of Abraham*

**GENERAL WOLFE HAD LONG CONSIDERED METHODS OF DISRUPTING A FRENCH ATTACK IN COLUMN. ON THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM, HIS TACTICS SUCCEEDED BEYOND HIS WILDEST DREAMS**

Four years before the fateful battle at Québec, Wolfe had instructed his former regiment, the 20th Foot, on how to deal with a French attack in column. Rather than the entire British line opening fire at the same time, he ordered the wings of the line to fire 'obliquely' upon the enemy, but for the centre of the line to hold its fire until the enemy was closer.

In addition to this, the central units were to load their muskets with two or even three balls, to maximise the effectiveness of their initial volley. Delivered at a murderously close range, such a volley would likely stop an advancing column in its tracks, or at least check its advance momentarily. Wolfe then directed that the centre of the line should retire to the wings, which could wheel to face the stricken column before firing once more or attacking with the bayonet.

At Québec, the 43rd and 47th Regiments did indeed double-load their muskets, but just one volley (described by Captain John Knox of the 43rd as "as remarkable a close and heavy discharge, as I ever saw") was enough to send the French into a headlong retreat and win the battle.




*Benjamin West's heavily dramatised painting of the death of General Wolfe*

# TREATIES OF THE WAR

## Four treaties brought an end to the fighting in the Seven Years' War and for most of the nations involved, it was a case of 'as you were'

Warfare in the 18th century is usually characterised as limited, especially in the context of the war aims of the various belligerents. There is no doubt that the Seven Years' War did not reach the intensity of the earlier Thirty Years' War, but many historians have identified elements of 'total war' in the conflict. The impact of the conflict on civilians and the drain on the economies of the powers involved are often cited as moves towards a more modern mode of waging war. However, this was a conventional 18th century conflict in at least one respect – the manner in which it ended.

With the combatants all nearing the point of exhaustion, the final manoeuvres took place not on the battlefield, but around negotiating tables, as a series of treaties brought peace to the world once more. With territories and islands used as bargaining chips, the countries settled down to decide who would keep what.

### ST PETERSBURG 5 MAY 1762

Managing threats from France, Austria and Russia had pushed Prussia to the very brink of annihilation, so the sudden change in fortunes when the Empress Elizabeth passed away was little short of miraculous. In fact, the treaty that resulted from Peter III ascending to the throne was known as the 'Miracle of the House of Brandenburg'.

Frederick the Great had been forced to switch from his original aggressive approach to the war, to a more defensive posture as he started to run out of quality soldiers and the future for Prussia was uncertain to say the least.

The terms offered by Peter were generous, but as Frederick's number one fan that is perhaps not surprising. All of the Prussian territory occupied by Russia was returned, and Russia also pledged to help bring a general peace to Europe and, in particular, peace between the Prussians and Sweden. Frederick himself was understandably delighted.

Dizzying as this change of fortune for Prussia was, it might almost as quickly have reverted to its former state when Catherine the Great took power from her husband in a coup, after he had been on the throne for just six months. Eight days later, Peter III was dead. Fortunately for the Prussians, although Catherine was not as well disposed to Frederick as her husband had been, she recognised that her country was exhausted by the war effort and allowed the peace treaty to stand.

***Left:** Catherine II seized power from Peter III, whom she forced to abdicate*

**WHAT IT MEANT:** **Possibly the most important treaty of the entire war – at a stroke, the survival of Prussia was almost assured.**


### HAMBURG 22 MAY 1762

The good news continued to come for Frederick the Great and Prussia. Although a minor power in the war, Sweden was still part of the long list of enemies lining up to destroy Prussia, so a treaty with them was welcome. The Swedes effectively had no choice following the cessation of hostilities between Prussia and Russia, and they were nearing financial collapse at any rate.

Among Sweden's limited war aims had been the recovery of territories in Pomerania. In fact this small part of the Seven Years' War, marked by the inability of either side to score a decisive victory, is also known as the Pomeranian War, but Sweden's dreams had to be shelved as the treaty restored the ante-bellum status quo.

In an interesting twist, the Queen of Sweden, Louisa Ulrika, was Frederick the Great's sister and he declared openly that only her mediation had persuaded him to agree to peace.

Apparently there was still some fight left in Frederick, if not, by this stage, his nation.

**WHAT IT MEANT:** **A relatively minor treaty, but one that freed Prussia from the burden of another enemy and made its survival even more likely.**

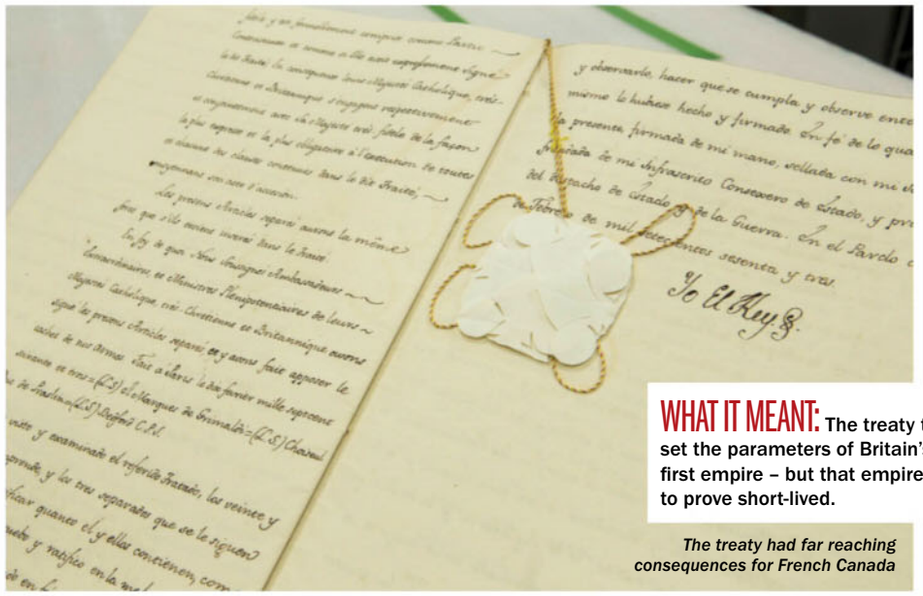
**"IN AN INTERESTING TWIST, THE QUEEN OF SWEDEN, LOUISA ULRIKA, WAS FREDERICK THE GREAT'S SISTER AND HE DECLARED OPENLY THAT ONLY HER MEDIATION HAD PERSUADED HIM TO AGREE TO PEACE"**

## PARIS 10 FEBRUARY 1763

France and Britain had been involved in discussions about a possible peace treaty as early as 1761, much to the annoyance of Frederick the Great, who faced the possibility of losing his main ally if the British made a separate peace. Britain had resisted the temptation to get out of the war quickly following its string of victories in 1759, primarily due to the large possibility of Spain entering the war, but also the chance of stripping the Spanish of some of their colonial possessions was too good to ignore.

Britain did extremely well in the Treaty of Paris. Canada, the Ohio River valley, all lands to the east of the Mississippi, Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland were to be British as were Grenada and the Lesser Antilles (with the exception of St Lucia). Minorca (which fell to the French in 1756) was returned to Britain in exchange for Belle Isle, while Cuba and the Philippines were handed back to Spain in exchange for Florida. Britain also attained dominance in India.

France got two islands off Newfoundland and the Caribbean islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Marie-Galante. Notable among the provisions of the treaty was the fact that, although many pre-war possessions were simply exchanged, Britain made significant gains in North America. The French were willing to give up Canada for the sugar-producing colony of Guadeloupe, symptomatic of the greater importance of West Indies possessions. Britain would also see things the same way during the later American War of Independence, which was ended by another 'Treaty of Paris', in 1783.



**WHAT IT MEANT:** The treaty that set the parameters of Britain's first empire – but that empire was to prove short-lived.

*The treaty had far reaching consequences for French Canada*

Relations between Prussia and Britain were damaged by the earlier negotiations between France and Britain, and Frederick the Great was to become antagonistic towards Britain, most notably when he strongly advised Catherine the Great not to hire Russian troops for the war against its rebellious North American colonists.

## HUBERTUSBURG 15 FEBRUARY 1763

With the removal of Russia and Sweden from its list of allies, following the treaties of St Petersburg and Hamburg, Austria was in an increasingly lonely position. War-weariness and economic exhaustion were also becoming major problems, as they were for all of the combatants by this stage. There was little alternative but to look for a peaceful settlement with Prussia and a ceasefire in November of 1762 was quickly followed by talks.

Prussia was willing to negotiate partly because a change of monarch in Britain (from George II to George III, in 1760) had brought a change of attitude from the British. Though not as dramatic as that wrought by the accession of Peter III in Russia, it was still important, as the new British monarch was much more interested in focusing on colonial issues and less interested in propping up the Prussians with an annual subsidy.

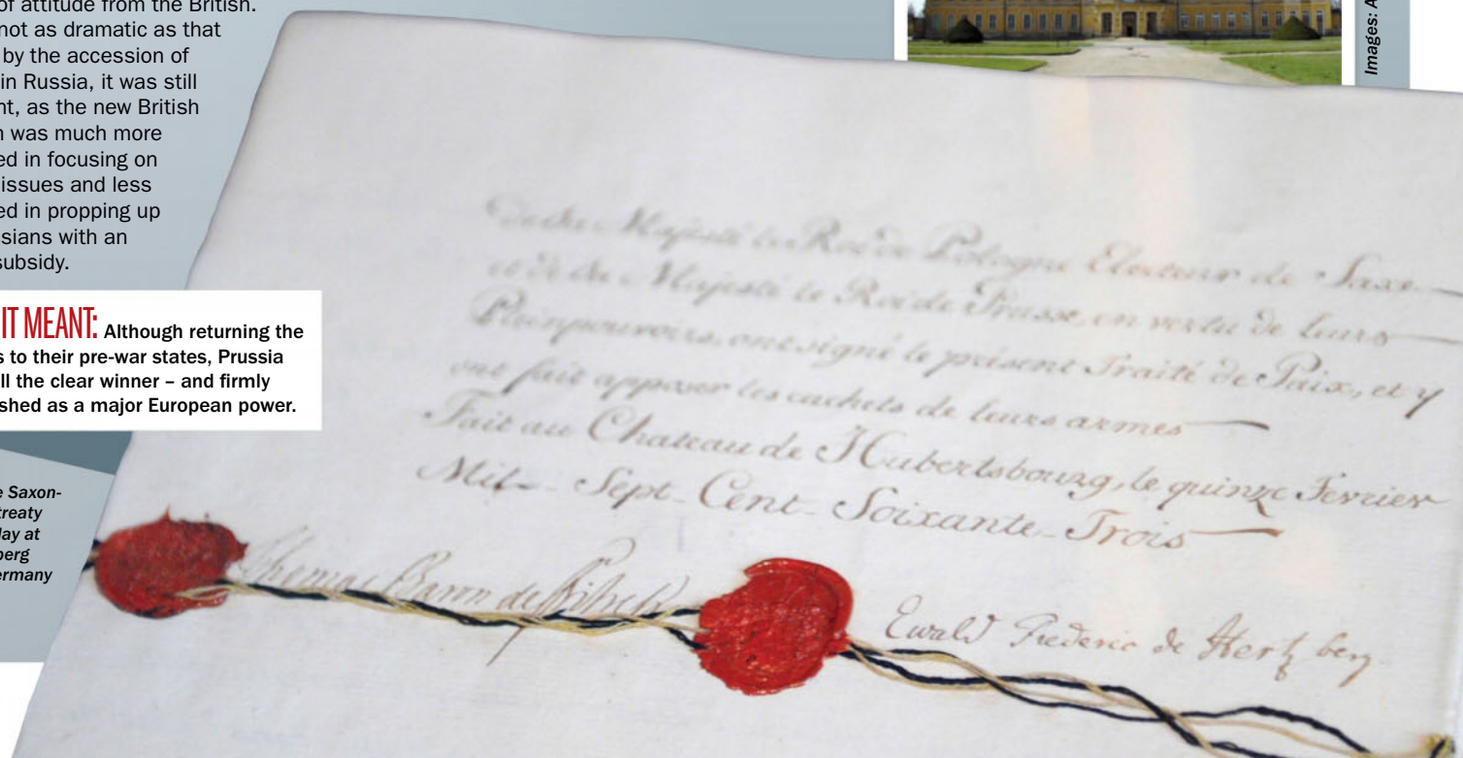
Austria's incentive to end the war was increased when Britain, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris and, just five days later, the Seven Years' War came to a close with the Treaty of Hubertusburg (named after the extravagant hunting lodge, pictured inset, at which it was signed).

The treaty comprised two peace treaties, between Prussia and Austria and Prussia and Saxony. Perhaps surprisingly, given the duration and cost of the war, the treaty returned everything to its pre-war state; there was no trading of territories that characterised the Treaty of Paris. Austria was forced to give up its claim to Silesia, making the entire war something of a waste of effort, while Prussia withdrew from Saxony.

Prussia, although it had been pushed to the edge of collapse during the war, emerged as a first-rank power, but the cost of survival had been enormous.

*Images: Alamy*

**WHAT IT MEANT:** Although returning the nations to their pre-war states, Prussia was still the clear winner – and firmly established as a major European power.



***Right:** The Saxon-Prussian treaty is on display at Hubertusberg Castle, Germany*

# FREDERICK, THE GREAT?

## David Smith weighs up the opinions regarding Frederick the Great, and his influence on the Seven Years' War

Of all the characters associated with the Seven Years' War, and there are plenty of them, one stands above all others. Frederick II of Prussia, known as Frederick the Great, was the dominant figure of the conflict, and the one that emerged with the most formidable reputation.

History, however, has not always been kind to Frederick, and he has been elevated to iconic status only to be brought crashing back to earth by revisionist interpretations. What cannot be denied is that he was the central figure in the drama that engulfed much of the world in bloody warfare in the middle of the 18th century.

The contradictions apparent in this larger-than-life character are embodied in the fact that one historian could label him both a 'cultured aesthete who loved music, architecture and philosophy' and 'a brutal and cynical warmonger, who dragged his kingdom through a series of wars that emptied his treasury and killed a large portion of his subjects', in the space of consecutive sentences.

Coming to power in 1740, Frederick lost no time in embarking on what was to become his favourite pastime – war. He invaded Austrian-held Silesia and sparked off the War of the Austrian Succession. The outcome of this war, Prussian occupation of Silesia, became one of the primary factors in the opening of the Seven Years' War, in which Frederick again proved himself willing to anticipate the starter's pistol, this time invading Saxony.

The Prussian Army became renowned for its discipline and precision on the battlefield, while Frederick earned a reputation as a military genius, and it is true that he won several remarkable victories. His most famous tactic was the famed 'oblique approach', by which he would concentrate on an enemy's flank, achieving local superiority even on a battlefield where he was badly outnumbered. With so many enemies fielding huge armies against him, this was often a necessity and Frederick proved able to fend off multiple opponents to keep his country (just about) intact.

The use of 'interior lines of communication' was also a key to Frederick's success, making rapid marches to confront enemies on different fronts and preventing them from uniting against him or operating effectively in concert.

But how much of this was genuine military genius? Many historians now simply believe that he was employing existing tactics and strategies – maybe with more precision thanks to the discipline of his army, but certainly not in any truly innovative way.

It is also the case that as the Seven Years' War progressed he found it increasingly difficult to field an effective army, with substandard and raw recruits unable to master the battlefield choreography he had employed early in the war. This forced him to adopt an increasingly defensive strategy.

The survival of Prussia, and its elevation to the ranks of the great European powers, was an undeniable triumph, but Frederick famously lost as many battles as he won and for every Leuthen (a stunning victory) there was a Kolín (a stunning reverse). Importantly, Frederick's victories were often as bloody as his defeats and the loss of thousands of men every time he fought a major battle was something his relatively small country could not sustain.

Frederick also had a little luck on his side (which is something Napoleon recognised as a critical component of any general's make-up). At Kunersdorf, in August 1759, everything went wrong for Frederick. He was unable to prevent the Russians and Austrians from combining their forces and his oblique approach broke against an entrenched enemy with strong artillery support. Out of an army of 50,000 that started the battle, it is estimated that only 3,000 men marched away with Frederick at the end of it.

That may not sound like Frederick was particularly lucky at Kunersdorf, but the respect in which he was held by his opponents prevented them from following up their victory quickly enough, and he lived to fight another day despite having professed that 'everything is lost'.

Following the Seven Years' War, the Prussian Army became even more a symbol of draconian discipline, but it was found wanting in the Napoleonic Wars, where it was smashed by the French at Jena- Auerstadt in 1806. By this time, of course, the country no longer had Frederick the Great at its head, or leading its armies.

***Right:** Although Frederick's character still polarises opinion today, his reputation as a warrior has never waned*

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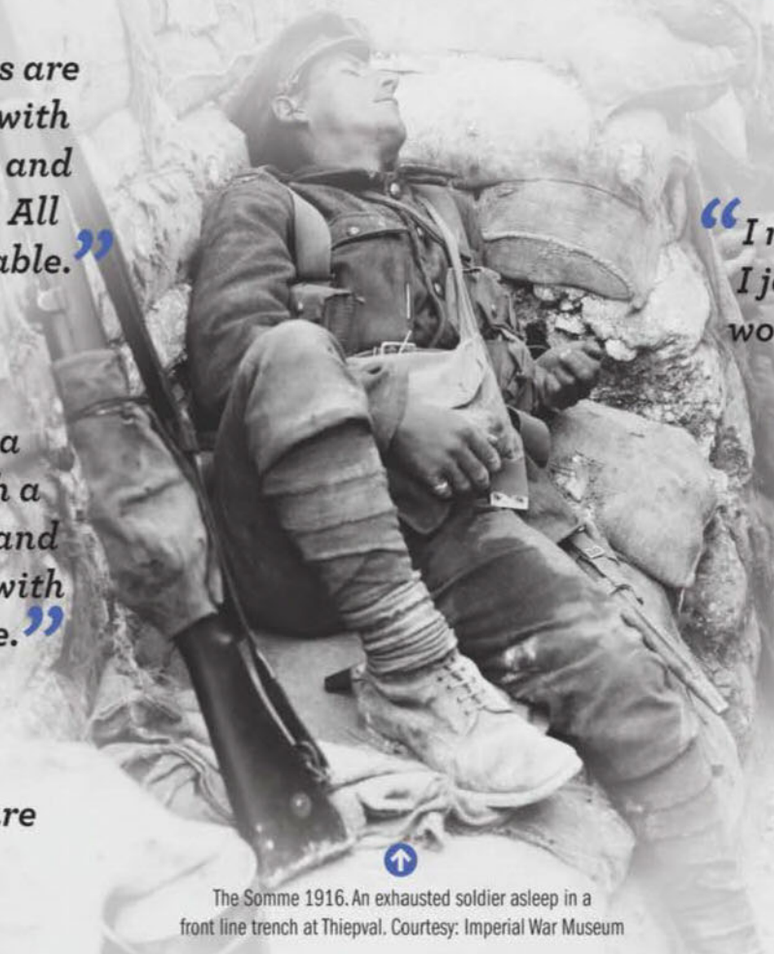

The Somme 1916. An exhausted soldier asleep in a front line trench at Thiepval. Courtesy: Imperial War Museum

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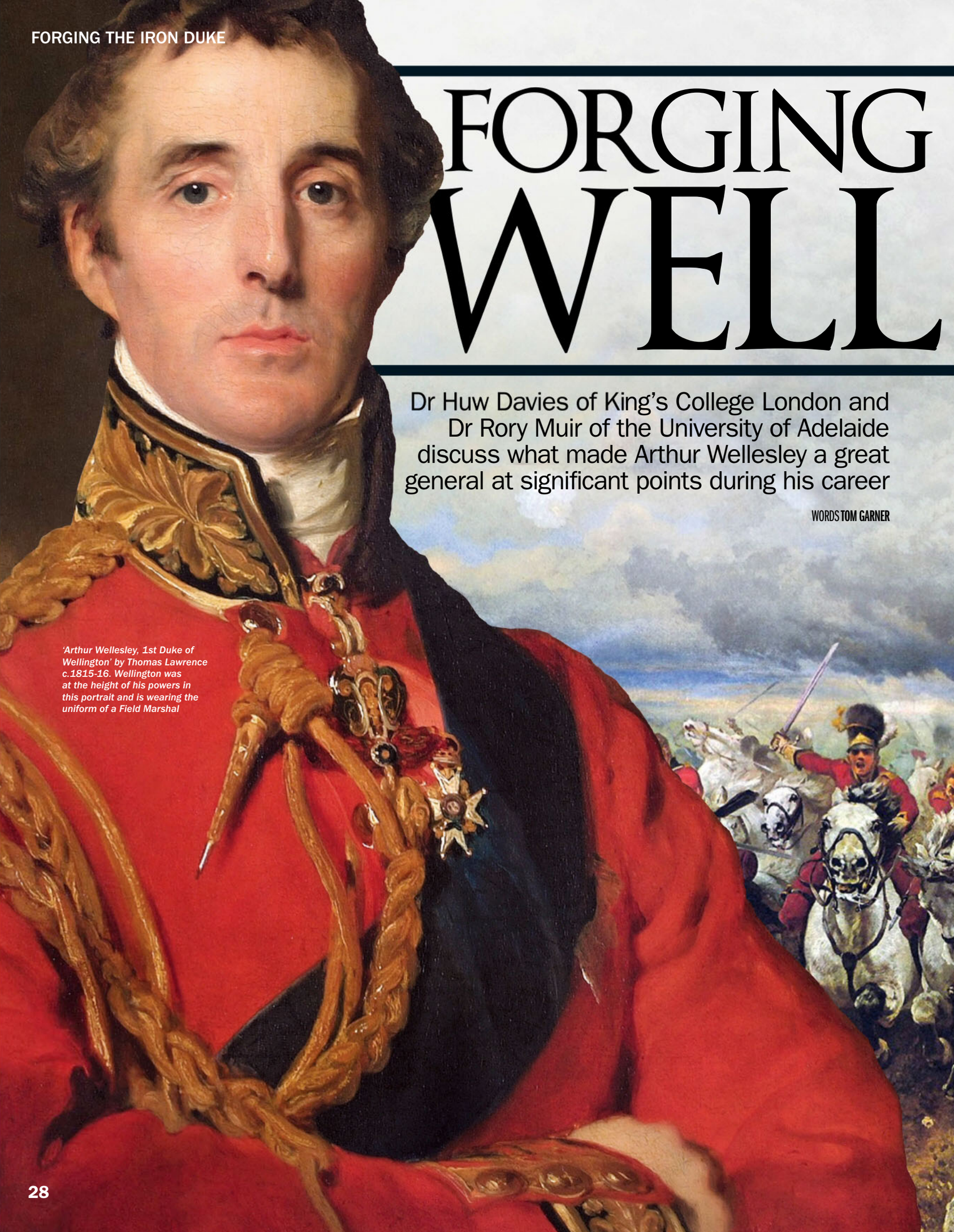
# FORGING WELL

Dr Huw Davies of King's College London and Dr Rory Muir of the University of Adelaide discuss what made Arthur Wellesley a great general at significant points during his career

WORDS **TOM GARNER**



*'Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington' by Thomas Lawrence c.1815-16. Wellington was at the height of his powers in this portrait and is wearing the uniform of a Field Marshal*

# THE IRON DUKE: INGTON

The military career of Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, is one the most impressive of any British general. After rising to become one of the most significant captains of his age, he won successive victories in India, Portugal, Spain, France and finally Belgium where he defeated the 'Master of Europe' Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite his undistinguished career as British Prime Minister, Wellington was lionised in his own lifetime and ever since. However, towering figure though he may be, Wellington did make mistakes in his career and his reputation as a man who 'never lost a battle' is somewhat misleading. It is time to reassess the 'Iron Duke' and revisit key moments where Wellington won, but almost fell by the sword.

Born Arthur Wesley in Ireland in 1769 to an aristocratic Anglo-Irish family, the future Wellington hated his schooldays at Eton and showed little signs of greatness, with his mother stating, "I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur." Things changed when he attended the Academy of Equitation in Angers, France where among other skills he became fluent in French. He was commissioned in the British Army in 1787 as an ensign and by 1793 he was a lieutenant colonel, largely thanks to his politician brother Richard's money and influence.

Wesley first saw action in 1794 in the Netherlands under the command of the 'Grand

**"IT IS TIME TO REASSESS THE 'IRON DUKE' AND REVISIT KEY MOMENTS WHERE WELLINGTON WON, BUT ALMOST FELL BY THE SWORD"**

*'Scotland Forever' by Elizabeth Lady Butler, famously depicts the charge of the Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo*

Old' Duke of York. The campaign was a failure and he later remarked that the experience taught him, "what one ought *not* to do; and that is always something!" Learning from mistakes would be a hallmark throughout his career.
In 1797, Wesley was posted to India where his elder brother Richard (now Lord Wellesley, a surname both siblings adopted) had been appointed as governor-general. Selected as his brother's military advisor, Wellesley spent years strengthening British rule in India, which culminated in his first major victory at Assaye in 1803.

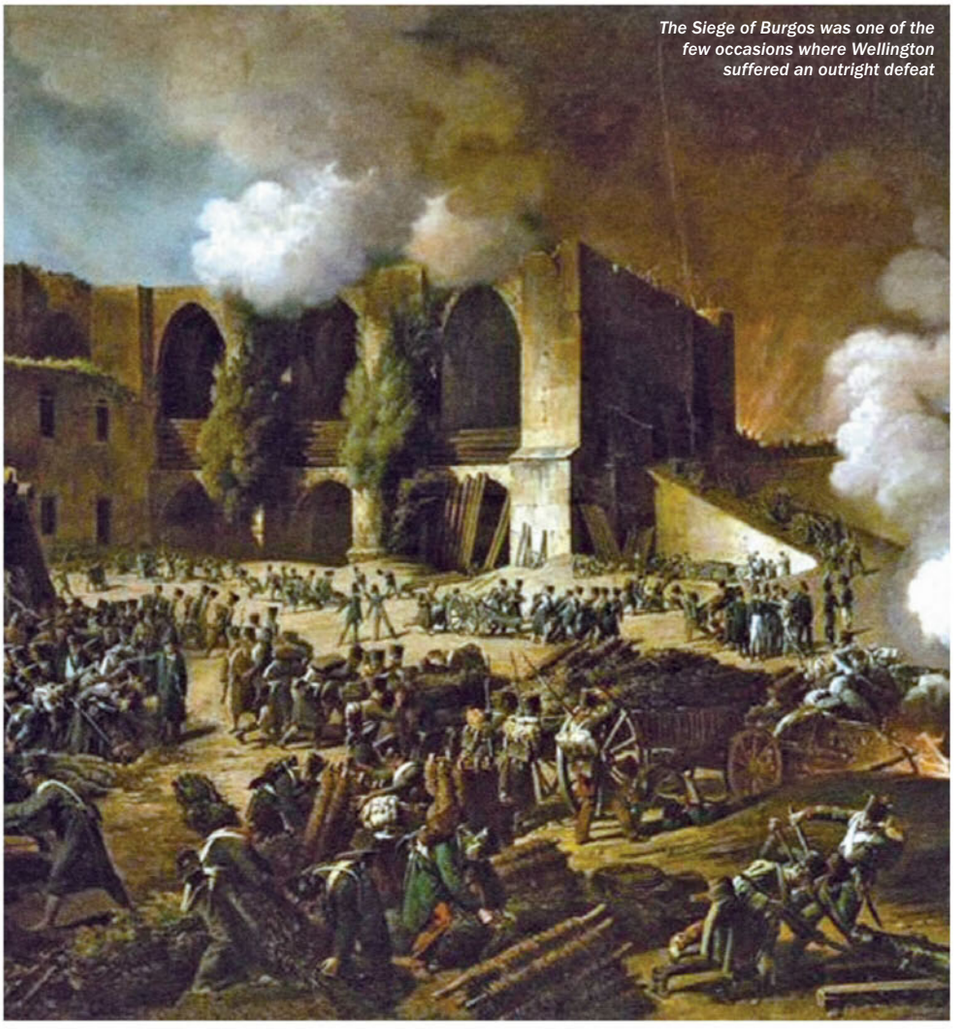
## Early tests: Assaye & Vimeiro

Wellesley was now a major general and fought in the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-05) where the Maratha Empire opposed British control in India. The conflict led to Wellesley fighting a desperate, but victorious fight at Assaye on 23 September 1803. Having erroneously divided his army, Wellesley's small force of around 7,000 stumbled across a huge Maratha army of 40-50,000 in a strong position behind the River Kaitna. Although his men had already marched 20 miles that day, and were unable to retreat, Wellesley attacked, placing his army between two rivers. This protected his flanks but would have been a death trap had he been defeated.

The Marathas, who had been trained in European methods, cleverly changed their front and assaulted Wellesley's right flank with heavy artillery fire as he advanced across the Kaitna. One third of the 5,000 men who crossed the river became casualties but on the opposite bank Wellesley's men reformed and with the help of a cavalry charge routed the Marathas who lost 6,000 killed. It was a remarkable victory, despite the fact that Wellesley could have avoided it, and it made his military reputation.

Wellington returned home in 1805 to a Europe convulsed by war. In that year, the Royal Navy had won a resounding victory at Trafalgar but Napoleon Bonaparte had trounced his opponents at Austerlitz and dominated the continent. He continued with successes at Jena-Auerstedt (1806) and Friedland (1807) and then turned against his former ally, Spain, by usurping the Spanish throne in 1808 and placing his brother Joseph upon it. The Spanish violently rebelled against the French and this encouraged the British to send an expeditionary force to the Iberian Peninsula. The Peninsular War had begun.

**"IT WAS A REMARKABLE VICTORY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WELLESLEY COULD HAVE AVOIDED IT, AND IT MADE HIS MILITARY REPUTATION"**



*The Siege of Burgos was one of the few occasions where Wellington suffered an outright defeat*

## Despite his impressive career, why did Wellington consider his first major victory at Assaye his finest accomplishment on the battlefield?

HUW DAVIES:

**He snatched victory from defeat. It was something of a surprise encounter and the victory at Assaye really goes back to the previous few weeks campaigning where Wellesley constantly underestimated his opponents, the Maratha Army. He had made the assumption that the Maratha Army was predominately a regular force, one based on predatory cavalry rather than well-trained European infantry. When he unexpectedly found them, he decided that he would attack. Only the previous day he had split his force into two because he didn't expect to find them because of the difficult terrain. He decided to attack them with only half the force that he had. He could see there were about 40,000 troops, but the vast majority were camp followers and suppliers. A lot of the cavalry couldn't be put into action and what remained was the infantry. It turned out that the infantry were trained in European methods by German mercenaries and they manoeuvred using European tactics, successfully resisting Wellesley's initial assaults.**

**It was his first major victory on the battlefield but his previous successes had been very low-key. This was an opportunity to prove himself as a worthy battlefield commander. It very nearly went wrong and it was only because of his personal intervention on several occasions that he achieved success. In many ways his management of the campaign until the battle was deficient but during the battle his tactical ability and calm demeanour despite the intense pressure enabled him to ensure success. However, it came at an enormous cost. He lost a third of his European infantry and was substantially weakened for weeks until reinforcements arrived.**

**Nevertheless it knocked the Marathas more than it did the British. Wellesley considered it to be one of his greatest victories because it was his first tactical battlefield success and because he managed to turn a dire situation that was largely of his own making into one of considerable achievement.**

*Below: The Battle of Assaye was Wellington's first great victory against the Maratha Empire in India*

*Left: Wellington considered Napoleon to be one of the best generals of all time*

## Wellington in Spain & Portugal

Lieutenant General Wellesley was despatched with the intention of preventing Portugal from being occupied by the French and disembarked his army 160 kilometres north of Lisbon in early August 1808. However, Wellesley learned that he was to be superseded in command by the governor of Gibraltar and marched quickly south to inflict defeats on the French before he was replaced. He first encountered the French at Roliça on 17 August and won a small victory. Shortly afterwards, on 28 August, he won his first major Peninsula fight at Vimeiro.

Wellesley's 18,000 men outnumbered the 14,000 French troops marching under Major General Junot. The French attacked in column, which was their standard practice, but were thrown back by volley fire from the British infantry who then advanced with bayonet charges. Two French brigades were pushed back northwards and it was only the lack of British cavalry and artillery that prevented Junot being decisively defeated. Portugal was saved from invasion but Wellesley received little thanks.

**"IT WAS ONLY THE LACK OF BRITISH CAVALRY AND ARTILLERY THAT PREVENTED JUNOT BEING DECISIVELY DEFEATED"**

He was recalled to Britain for reluctantly signing an agreement under orders that allowed the French to evacuate their troops from Portugal. In his absence, a British advance into Spain failed and was evacuated from Corunna with Portugal once again being threatened. Wellesley returned in April 1809, reorganised the Anglo-Portuguese armies, expelled the French and set his sights on a new advance into Spain.

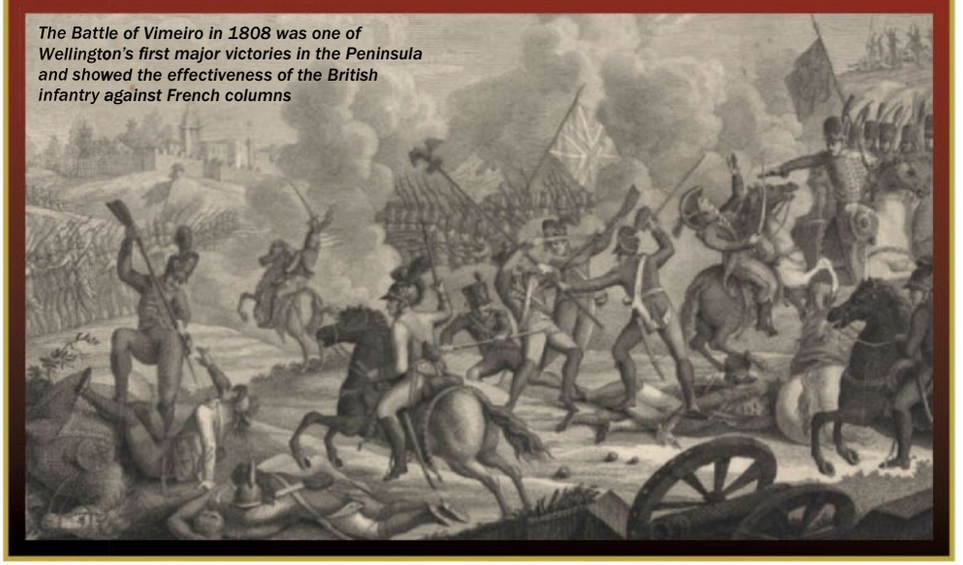
He moved into the country in June but the campaign became chaotic with his advance being hampered by the incompetence of his allies. Communications were poor and Spanish promises of food and transport were not kept. Consequently the British Army only received ten days of rations between 20 July to 20

## To what extent did the Battle of Vimeiro form Wellington's strategies for defeating French offensive tactics?

RORY MUIR:

**The army Wellington commanded in 1808 was made up of excellent regiments in good condition, but not accustomed to the demands of campaigning or settled into higher commands: staff officers and the senior officers in the army were mostly inexperienced and had yet to learn how to work together. Nonetheless, Wellington took the offensive on the campaign and advanced boldly against the French, without waiting for the reinforcements that he knew were on the way. There were good strategic reasons for this; the campaign in Portugal was just a preliminary operation to a campaign in Spain. He infused the army with an offensive spirit that got a little out of hand at Roliça, and only stood on the defensive at Vimeiro because he was ordered to do so by Sir Harry Burrard, who arrived on the day before the battle, but who otherwise left Wellington in command until the fighting was virtually over.**

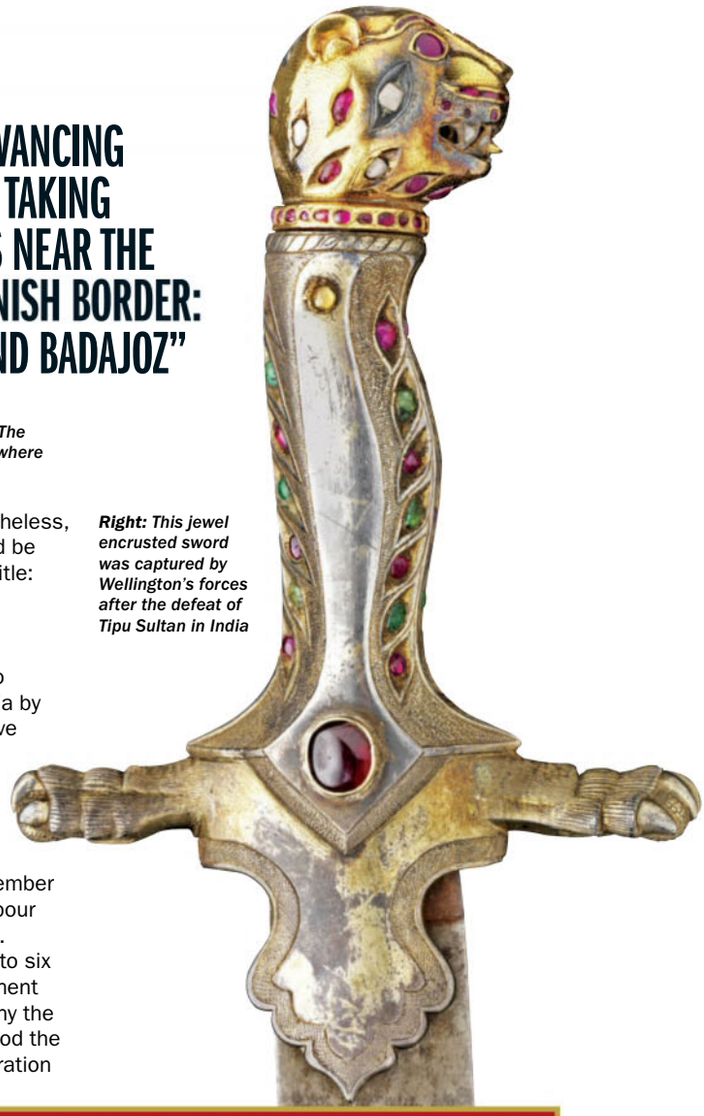
**In the battle the British infantry used tactics that would become familiar over the course of the Peninsular War: extensive use of light infantry and skirmishers; fighting in line; reliance on a single volley or short firefight followed by a determined charge. While Wellington combined these elements with great skill, both at Vimeiro and in later battles, he did not invent them: they were already standard practice for British infantry and had been seen in earlier battles including in Egypt in 1801 and southern Italy in 1806. More significant was the confidence that Wellington instilled in the officers and men at all levels and the speed with which he reacted to the French attempt to turn his flank. It set the pattern for much that would follow, not least in confirming the confidence of the British troops in their superiority, if the odds were anything like even.**



*The Battle of Vimeiro in 1808 was one of Wellington's first major victories in the Peninsula and showed the effectiveness of the British infantry against French columns*

**Left:** *'The Third of May 1808' by Francisco Goya. The Peninsular War was notable for its brutal nature where many atrocities were committed on all sides*

## "THE KEY TO ADVANCING INTO SPAIN WAS TAKING TWO FORTRESSES NEAR THE PORTUGUESE-SPANISH BORDER: CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ"



**Right:** *This jewel encrusted sword was captured by Wellington's forces after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in India*

August while French armies encroached on the Anglo-Spanish force, meeting at Talavera 120 kilometres southwest of Madrid on 27 July. The French numbered 46,000 while the Anglo-Spanish consisted of 55,000 men, but of those only 21,500 were British and Wellesley felt that he could not rely on the Spanish. He therefore used terrain to aid him, positioning his men in a variety of defensive positions including streams, ravines, high ground and even olive groves and irrigation channels.

Fierce fighting occurred over 27-28 July and the French retreated but the British were too exhausted to follow them. Allied casualties were similar to the French, at approximately 7,000, with the British taking a disproportionate share of the losses. With other French armies closing in, Wellesley was forced to leave his wounded behind and retreated to the Portuguese frontier. He later angrily wrote to the British government about the Spanish: "I can only tell you that I feel no inclination to join in co-operation with them again." Nevertheless, Talavera gave hope that the French could be defeated and Wellesley received a new title: Viscount Wellington.

### Siege mentality

Following Talavera, Wellington decided to ensure a lasting British presence in Iberia by ordering the construction of two defensive lines of trenches and fortifications between 20-40 kilometres north of Lisbon, which became known as the Lines of Torres Vedras. The lines stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the River Tagus and were built between November 1809 to September 1810 using local labour under the command of British engineers. Each redoubt was garrisoned with three to six guns and 200-300 men while any prominent landscape features were flattened to deny the enemy cover. Rivers were dammed to flood the ground below hills and this massive operation

## Can the Battle of Talavera be described as a victory for Wellington or a victory for French strategy?

RORY MUIR:

**Both. After driving Soult from Oporto in the spring of 1809 Wellington saw an opportunity to advance into central Spain in partnership with the Spanish armies commanded by Cuesta and Venegas. The French had more and better troops in the Peninsula overall, but a large part of their force was stuck in the remote wilds of Galicia, and Wellington believed that the Anglo-Spanish forces could overwhelm the relatively weak French armies in central Spain, capture Madrid, and perhaps even drive them back to the Ebro, before the troops from Galicia and those tied up in the siege of Saragossa could intervene. It was a bold plan, but it had a reasonable chance of success.**

**Wellington advanced towards Madrid in concert with Cuesta; the French forces in central Spain, under King Joseph, concentrated against the allies, but were defeated at the Battle of Talavera in late July. This opened the road to Madrid; however allied hopes were dashed by the news that Soult and Ney had abandoned their operations in Galicia – not in response to news of Wellington's advance, but quite independently, because they had quarrelled – and were marching south threatening Wellington's lines of communication.**

**Wellington's army had suffered heavily in its victory at Talavera, and any battle with this second French army would have been fought at a disadvantage, while the strategic opportunity, which Wellington had sought to exploit had now disappeared, so he withdrew from the campaign. Talavera had been a real victory, but the campaign ended with the French preserving their strategic position, with their armies more concentrated in the part of Spain that really mattered. However this not due to Wellington's advance, but rather a matter of chance.**

*The Battle of Talavera was the culmination of a hard campaign that exposed weaknesses in the Anglo-Spanish alliance*

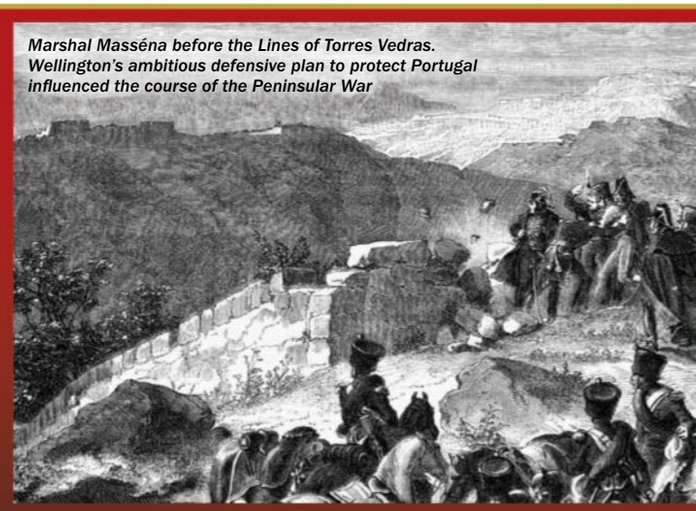
## What do the Lines of Torres Vedras say about Wellington's military strategy and approach to campaigning?

HUW DAVIES:

He clearly understood how to defeat the French. He knew that he couldn't defeat them in a pitched battle because they vastly outnumbered his forces in Spain. The French had close to 300,000 troops and he had 80,000 but only about 50,000 were any good in 1810. He stood no chance if he attempted to go on the offensive trying to achieve what the British government would term a 'decisive victory' and that's what they wanted. They didn't want a long campaign, but a short one that would decisively weaken or undermine Napoleonic France.

Wellington decides that the strategy he has to apply in the Peninsula is to draw the French into a long attrition campaign where Britain has the greater resources to beat the French in the longer term. If he can draw them into his trap then he can be supplied from the sea, ensuring the British are reinforced while the French are forced to live off the land.

When planning the campaign he knows that he's not going to be able to draw the French into an attrition war if they know what is happening so he keeps very tight security. In 1810 he deliberately sets out to appear that he's on a fighting retreat. He's drawing the French into this trap knowing that they don't know about the lines, which he argues are impenetrable



*Marshal Masséna before the Lines of Torres Vedras. Wellington's ambitious defensive plan to protect Portugal influenced the course of the Peninsular War*

for troops of 100,000 men. The French have about 70,000 so he's pretty confident he's going to succeed.

By October 1810, he's fallen back to Torres Vedras and Marshal Masséna arrives and concludes that they're impenetrable. Nonetheless, he lays siege to them for six months, loses half his force to starvation and disease and then clears off in March 1811 having suffered considerably. It's one of the classic strategic defensive plans in military history.

was completed under the strictest security to deny the French knowledge of its existence.

The deception worked and when the French attempted to advance into Portugal they unexpectedly came across the lines. Marshal Masséna reputedly remarked, "Even if we had forced some point of the Lines, we should not have had enough men left to seize and occupy Lisbon." Masséna probed at the lines for a month but was eventually forced to withdraw. Portugal was secured and Wellington renewed his attack into Spain with increased confidence.

The key to advancing into Spain was taking two fortresses near the Portuguese-Spanish border: Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. The citadels were 130 miles apart but Wellington had to take them quickly as the French had the strength to concentrate numerically larger armies against him. Speed and surprise were essential but this was difficult as siege warfare was a slow process. Nonetheless, Wellington threw his well-prepared army into a mid-winter assault on Ciudad Rodrigo. Despite heavy casualties, the fortress was stormed and taken in January 1812 and this success encouraged Wellington to move south and take Badajoz, but this proved much more difficult.

There had already been two unsuccessful sieges at Badajoz and the French had taken steps to improve their defences and supplies. Wellington had to move fast as the armies of Marshals Marmont and Soult were threatening him. The fortress was assaulted on the night

**"THE BRITISH LOST NEARLY 5,000 MEN IN ONE NIGHT AND THE SURVIVORS THEN WENT ON A VENGEFUL ORGY OF LOOTING, RAPE AND MURDER"**

*Arthur Wellesley aged 26 in 1795. Wellesley had seen action for the first time the year before in the Netherlands fighting under the Duke of York*

of 6-7 April despite inadequate breaches in the fortifications and the main storming parties took huge casualties.

Although Badajoz was taken, the British lost nearly 5,000 men in one night and the survivors then went on a vengeful orgy of looting, rape and murder, which Wellington found difficult to control. He openly wept when he saw the huge pile of corpses on the main breach, but he had achieved his main objectives and now pursued Marmont away from Portugal and caught up with him at Salamanca.

Wellington was initially delayed at Salamanca by recently improved defences and was unwilling to start a battle. Conversely, Marmont wouldn't attack Wellington in a prepared position and consequently the two armies cautiously manoeuvred around each other for weeks. But on 22 July Marmont opened a gap between his vanguard and centre and Wellington immediately attacked.

The British 3rd Division pushed back the leading French divisions while Wellington attacked Marmont's army from left to right. Marmont was wounded early in the battle

**"THE FRENCH STUBBORNLY RETREATED AND THE DAY BELONGED TO WELLINGTON. IT WAS SAID THAT HE DEFEATED AN ARMY OF 40,000 MEN IN 40 MINUTES"**

and was forced to transfer command to his subordinates. Although an initial French attack on the British centre was successful, Wellington's reserve forces first stopped it and then they crushed the attackers. The French stubbornly retreated and the day belonged to Wellington. It was said that he, "defeated an army of 40,000 men in 40 minutes."

The French lost 7,000 casualties along with the same number captured, while the British lost 5,000. As a reward Wellington became a Marquis and entered Madrid on 12 August.

## Onwards to Madrid and Burgos

The reasons for liberating the Spanish capital were politically motivated. The British government needed to provide a spectacular event that would send a message throughout Europe and Wellington needed to rest and resupply his army. The liberation soon turned sour, however, as there were still large French armies in the field. By not pursuing Marmont's army after Salamanca, Wellington had allowed the French to regroup behind the Ebro and once again concentrate against Wellington. The British had spent three weeks in Madrid and Wellington laid siege to Burgos with inadequate artillery and uncharacteristically failed to take the fortress despite launching five assaults against it.

With the French closing in, he called off the siege on 21 October and retreated all the way back to Ciudad Rodrigo, abandoning Madrid along the way. At the time it seemed a depressing defeat and appeared to be a withdrawal in a similar vein to Corunna and Talavera. However, his 1812 campaign meant that the French permanently abandoned

## Why wasn't Wellington as talented in siege warfare as he was on the battlefield?

HUW DAVIES:

**The reason Wellington isn't very good as that siege warfare is that it's very difficult. Unless you're going to do it over the course of many months it's going to be costly. The traditional method is to invest the fortress, cut off its supplies and then let the garrison starve. Eventually, when you do attack many months later, they're so weak that they can't put up any resistance. That's the usual way to do it but Wellington doesn't have that time luxury. If he spends months laying siege to Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz or Burgos then the French will concentrate against him and force him out.**

**He knows he's got to take these citadels very quickly. The other complicating factor is these are enemy-held fortresses but they're actually inhabited by allies. They're all Spanish cities and therefore Spanish allies are living in them. If he is going to lay siege to these citadels in a traditional manner, the population are going to be the ones who suffer more than the garrison because the garrison will take the population's food to survive so that's not compatible with Wellington's aims either.**

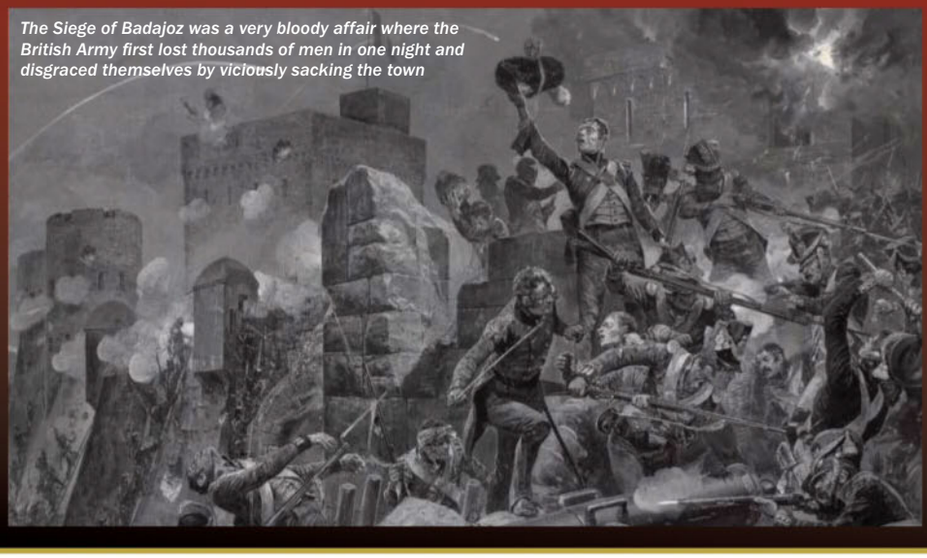
**All four of the major sieges Wellington engages in the Peninsula are symmetrical, star-shaped citadels, which have huge grassy banks leading up to the fortress and that provides no cover and the garrison can range firepower against you. You have to build very complex trench systems to get close enough to bring your batteries up to begin bombarding and blast a hole in the fortress wall. That takes a lot of precision and also gives the garrison an opportunity to do sorties and destroy the batteries so that becomes costly.**

**Once you've breached the fortress walls, traditionally you summon the garrison to surrender and if they don't then under the rules of war they should be put to the sword. It's a deterrent to send a message to the next garrison that if you don't surrender when the walls are breached you'll be executed too. At Ciudad Rodrigo the garrison doesn't surrender and Wellington storms it at some cost but he doesn't kill the garrison. This reflects Wellington's humanity but in certain respects it's an operational mistake because Badajoz's garrison now know that they can put up a very stiff resistance and they won't be killed for it.**

**The other factor is time. Once Wellington has blasted a breach in the fortress walls he's got to take it very quickly. At Badajoz it's a bloody nightmare where he loses over 4,000 of his best men in a night but it's all in aid of the fact that he has to take this fortress so that he can go on the offensive in 1812.**

**Ultimately, it's not down to a lack of ability on Wellington's part but the peculiar circumstances of the Peninsula and the fact that the French and the British are now using manoeuvre warfare rather than the positional methods of the 18th century. This is creating a new dynamic, which is making siege warfare much more costly. The Siege of Burgos goes catastrophically wrong when Wellington fails to take it in October 1812 and is forced to retreat all the way back to Ciudad Rodrigo. In 1813, he decides that siege warfare is too risky and he avoids them completely. Instead of using the big roads where the fortresses are, he uses small roads through northern Spain and avoids sieges completely until San Sebastián in August.**

**Wellington gets a very bad reputation for siege warfare and he does make mistakes but I don't think there is anything he could have done differently at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. There are ethical issues such as the bloody rampages that happen at Badajoz that are separate to that and he probably could have done more to curtail the violence, but it's very much a product of 18th-19th century warfare where soldiers are under such severe pressure that their rampages are their release. It's not acceptable but it's very difficult to do anything about.**



*The Siege of Badajoz was a very bloody affair where the British Army first lost thousands of men in one night and disgraced themselves by viciously sacking the town*

# Is the Battle of Salamanca an overrated victory considering that Wellington had to abandon Madrid and retreat back to Portugal in its aftermath?

RORY MUIR:
Wellington's victory at Salamanca was an accomplished and decided victory, which destroyed the morale and cohesion of Marmont's French army and opened the road to Madrid. However, Marmont commanded only one of five French armies in Spain in 1812, and Wellington's advance compelled the other French commanders to concentrate their greatly superior forces against him. Soult abandoned the siege of Cádiz and evacuated the whole of southern Spain, while the French Army of the North collected many of its garrisons and gave up its operations against the Spanish guerrillas in order to resist Wellington's advance on Burgos.

These French forces compelled Wellington to withdraw back to Portugal, but the French never re-occupied southern Spain, while the loosening of their grip on northern Spain was followed by it bursting into an open insurrection, which the French were unable to suppress. Six months later, in May 1813, when Wellington was ready to advance again, the French armies were scattered across northern Spain trying to contain the guerrillas and were poorly placed to resist the Anglo-Portuguese offensive.

The result was Wellington's remarkable march to Vitoria and the expulsion of the French from almost all of Spain. So far from being overrated, the battle of Salamanca was the turning point of the war in the Peninsula, even though its significance was not obvious to the officers and men in Wellington's army as they trudged wearily through the rain and mud back to Ciudad Rodrigo in November 1812.

*The Battle of Salamanca in 1812 is often described as one of Wellington's greatest victories*

**“TROOPS UNDER WELLINGTON’S COMMAND WERE STUBBORN AND AT THE FARMHOUSE OF HOUGOUMONT THE LARGELY BRITISH GARRISON HELD OUT ALL DAY FROM FORCES TEN TIMES THEIR NUMBER”**

***Left:** Wellington had his boots cut lower to make them more comfortable while wearing trousers. His name would forever become synonymous with the style*

southern Spain and in the long term helped to turn the tide of the Peninsular War.

In 1813, Wellington adopted a new strategy to eject the French from northern Spain. He aimed to advance along the French communication lines that ran northeast from the River Douro in north-central Spain to Bayonne in southern France. Along the way he isolated and then used Biscayan ports for his own communications and supplies. This would give the French no chance to regroup and the plan spectacularly worked. Between May and June 1813 he moved 100,000 men, 100 guns and other equipment 250 miles and moved his base to Santander on the Biscayan coast. He was now close to the French frontier and fought the retreating Marshal Jourdan and the erstwhile King of Spain Joseph Bonaparte at Vitoria on 21 June.

Wellington had the superior number of troops and planned to envelop the French between a bend in the Zamora River and the town of Vitoria. Although his tactics did not go quite according to plan, the French left and centre were broken after hard fighting and they descended into a disorderly retreat towards Pamplona at the cost of 6,000 casualties and 3,000 captured. Joseph’s army fled to France and he left behind his substantial baggage train. This included 150 guns, expensive treasures and a war chest of £1 million.

The lure of such booty led the British troops to be distracted by plunder and they lost the chance to capture more French prisoners. Nonetheless, the victory led to the final ejection of the French from Spain and Wellington became a field marshal. Despite another difficult siege at San Sebastián, Wellington continued northwards and crossed the River Bidasoa into France on 7 October, and, by 1814, the French were being attacked from all quarters.

After being decisively defeated at Leipzig in October 1813, Napoleon himself had been forced to retreat into France and the continental allies entered Paris on 31 March 1814. On 12 April, having just fought a battle at Toulouse Wellington learned that Napoleon had abdicated. After years of campaigning, the Peninsular War was over.

## The Hundred Days & Waterloo

Wellington was now an international superstar, titled ‘Duke of Wellington’, on 11 May 1814, and became a key diplomat at the Congress of Vienna to decide the future of post-Napoleonic Europe. However, Napoleon daringly escaped from his island exile on Elba and landed in France on 1 March 1815, to great acclaim from the French Army, and reinstalled himself as emperor. The allies, still at the Viennese Congress, declared war and sent Wellington

## Did Wellington make mistakes during the Hundred Days in 1815 and if so what were they?

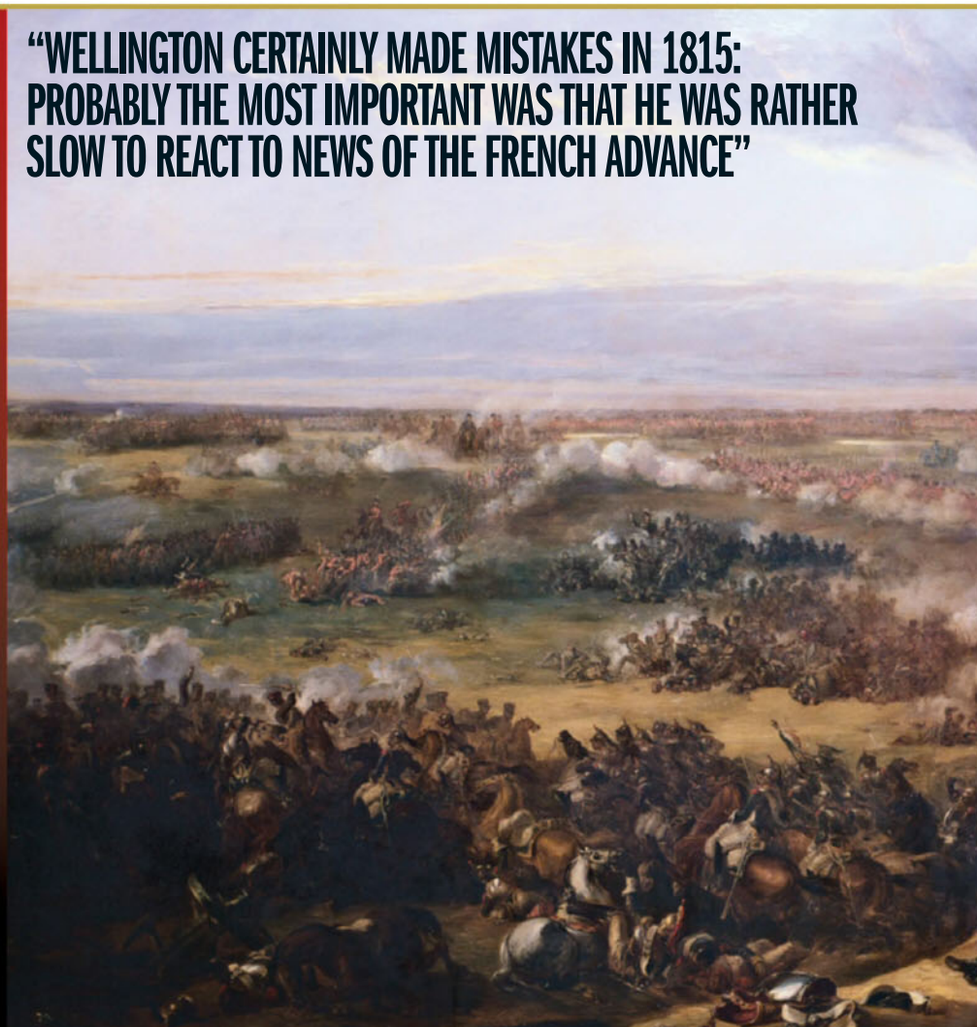
RORY MUIR:

**All generals make mistakes, and there has never been a campaign or a battle fought without mistakes being made on all sides, because waging war is extremely difficult. Probably the most important [mistake Wellington made] was that he was rather slow to react to news of the French advance. There had been many false alarms in the preceding weeks, and he believed that the greatest risk of defeat faced by the allies would be if he or Blücher made a false move at the outset; but he should have sent orders for his troops to prepare to march sooner than he did.**

**Wellington’s initial orders to I Corps (Prince of Orange) to concentrate around Nivelles would have removed Perponcher’s division from the cross roads at Quatre Bras; and this aspect of these orders was fortunately ignored by Generals Constant Rebecque and Perponcher so that no harm was actually done. The retention of a significant force at Hal to protect the western flank of the army on the day of the battle of Waterloo is also often regarded as a mistake, although I think that there is at least an argument that it was a sensible precaution.**

**Finally, in the battle, there were inevitably a number of points which can be criticized, most significantly that the left flank, that is the part of the line to the east of the road from Quatre Bras that was occupied by Picton’s division, should have been held in greater strength. But it is important not to lose perspective: Wellington made mistakes but he also got most things right, and he managed to regain the initiative and achieve a victory against a skilled and determined enemy who had seized the initial advantage.**

**“WELLINGTON CERTAINLY MADE MISTAKES IN 1815: PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THAT HE WAS RATHER SLOW TO REACT TO NEWS OF THE FRENCH ADVANCE”**



***Above:** This carbine and pistol are typical of those used by British cavalry against the French*

to Belgium to take command of a mixed army of British, German, Dutch and Belgian troops that were stationed alongside a Prussian army under Field Marshal Gebhard Blücher. Before he left, Wellington was counselled by Tsar Alexander I of Russia, "It is for you to save the world again."

Napoleon quickly assembled an army and invaded Belgium in June in order to break up the coalition ranged against him, which he initially managed to do. The forces of Wellington and Blücher became separated by some distance and two battles were fought at Ligny and Quatre Bras before Wellington and Napoleon met in battle for the first time on the Mont-Saint-Jean escarpment on 18 June. Despite being two kilometres away from the town of Waterloo, this is what the battle would become known as.

Waterloo was an extremely bloody encounter, and, for most of the day, the armies were

## Wellington called his troops the 'scum of the earth' after they looted the French baggage train after Vitoria. Is this fair or was he tacitly admitting that he wasn't entirely in control of his own soldiers?



HUW DAVIES:

**The problem at Vitoria isn't really the soldiers but the officers. Wellington blames the young officers for failing to keep control of the soldiers. His view is the captains and lieutenants should have been keeping the soldiers under control and in fact some of them take part in the plundering. The amount of baggage they find is a huge treasure trove, which includes the whole French treasury from Spain and other booty. For a young officer who is facing reasonably excessive costs for maintaining their lifestyle this is an extremely enticing opportunity and they get drawn into it as well. It's a little unfair of Wellington as the British Army still tells its young officers to not challenge drunken soldiers because they might assault the officer and the soldier is then in even more trouble so you deal with it after the fact.**

**I don't think Wellington lost control of the army; I think he's disappointed that some of the fresh troops that are sent forward in pursuit of the French also get drawn into the plunder. The King's Royal Hussars still have Joseph Bonaparte's silver chamber pot in their mess and sup from it at mess dinners, so it creates a mythology but Wellington was incredibly annoyed with them at the time.**

**The other thing to bear in mind is that the Battle of Vitoria comes at the end of four-week long march from the Portuguese border, which is about 450 miles through rugged terrain with limited supplies. They only take enough food to sustain them for three weeks because it's all they can carry. When they're fighting at Vitoria they're fighting on restricted rations and exhaustion. Wellington actually had a very good army, but one that was very exhausted when the battle began.**

***Below:** British soldiers auction off loot taken at the Battle of Vitoria*

*The outcome of the Battle of Waterloo hung in the balance for most of 18 June and Wellington soon described it as, "the nearest run thing you ever saw"*

evenly matched with Napoleon's 73,000 men slightly outnumbering Wellington's 68,000 (of which, 25,000 were British and only 7,000 of those were Peninsular veterans). Between 11.30am and 8pm the artillery on both sides hardly stopped firing. Wellington fought a defensive battle, planning to stay in the same prepared positions for as long as possible until the Prussians could arrive and help drive Napoleon away.

The Emperor's chief mistake that day was probably underestimating his opponent. Like his subordinate generals before him, he ordered numerous column assaults against the allied squares, hoping to pummel the enemy into retreat or as Wellington put it, "a pounding match". But troops under Wellington's command were stubborn and at the farmhouse of Hougoumont the largely British garrison held out all day from forces ten times their number. Nonetheless, Napoleon's relentless attacks did begin to have an effect as the day wore on and the French captured the farm of La Haye Sainte in Wellington's centre.

Wellington himself was everywhere on the battlefield and, although he was engaged in the fight of his life, he remained calm. By 4pm, he could hear the Prussian guns approaching on his left and used his own troops to reinforce his centre and right. The Prussians were soon fully engaged and Napoleon's elite regiment the Imperial Guard collapsed in front of British volley fire.

The battle was won and Wellington allowed the Prussians to pursue the fleeing French. He knew how close he had come to defeat stating the next day that the battle was, "the nearest run thing you ever saw." The massive casualties, about 26,000 French, 7,000 Prussians and 17,000 in his own army, also disturbed him. Wellington himself lost all but one of his personal staff killed or wounded and said shortly afterwards, "I hope to God that I have fought my last battle." He also cried when he read the list of the dead.

Wellington fulfilled his prophecy and Waterloo was his last battlefield command. In its aftermath, Napoleon retreated back to France, abdicated a second time and was exiled, this time permanently, to the distant island of Saint Helena under British guards, dying there in 1821. Wellington, who was the same age as his greatest foe, lived much longer until 1852 when he was given a huge state funeral. Through hard work, dogged campaigning and sheer guts and courage, Wellington had become one of the finest generals Britain has ever produced but he was surprisingly modest about his abilities. When asked who was the greatest military leader of his time, he generously replied, "In this age, in past ages, in any age, Napoleon!"

## FURTHER READING

- TO WAR WITH WELLINGTON: FROM THE PENINSULA TO WATERLOO BY **PETER SNOW**
- WELLINGTON: THE PATH TO VICTORY 1769-1814 BY **RORY MUIR**
- WELLINGTON'S WARS: THE MAKING OF A MILITARY GENIUS BY **HUW DAVIES**
- WELLINGTON: THE IRON DUKE BY **RICHARD HOLMES**

## OF ALL THE GREAT GENERALS IN BRITISH HISTORY DOES WELLINGTON DESERVE HIS REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE BEST OR ARE THERE OTHER CANDIDATES WHO RIVAL HIM?

RORY MUIR:

Comparisons between generals of different eras and countries are good fun, but waging war is so dependent on context and circumstance that it is impossible to come to any firm conclusions. Certainly Wellington's record is immensely impressive. The success he achieved in India, the Peninsula and at Waterloo is hard to rival, and for much of the time he was facing confident and tough opponents. He could be both extremely bold and immensely restrained – although contrary to legend, patience did not come naturally to him and his instincts were aggressive, to take the initiative, seek out the enemy and give battle as quickly as possible.

Between 1810 and the middle of 1812 he curbed this impulse, all too aware of the superior forces the French were bringing against him, and conscious that his own troops lacked experience manoeuvring in the open field, but from the morning of Salamanca to the Battle of Toulouse in 1814 he delighted in taking the attack to the French. His skill as a tactician cannot be doubted, but he is not always given the credit he deserves as a strategist, while in many ways his greatest achievement was in nurturing and encouraging the efficiency of his army, improving its practical discipline and demanding that its officers take their duties seriously. The Anglo-Portuguese army of 1814 was a very much more formidable fighting force than the British army of 1809.

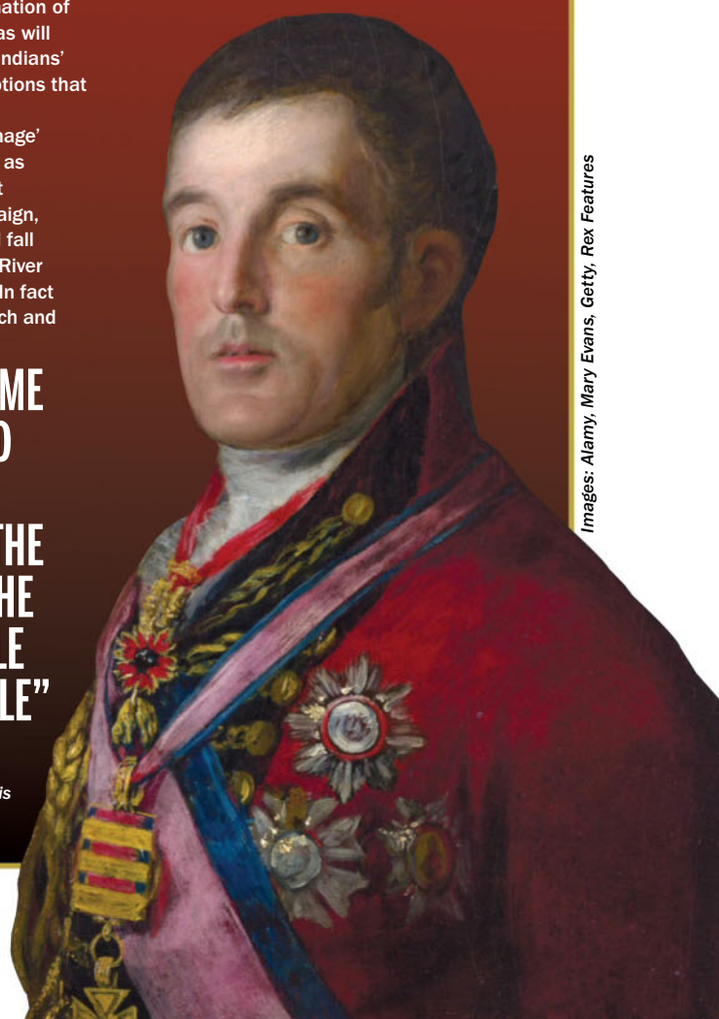
HUW DAVIES:

My argument would be that he does deserve the reputation he's got but not necessarily for the reasons everyone gives, which is that he's an innate genius, someone who understands terrain, understands warfare, is able to outthink his enemy without really demonstrating much effort and has a natural ability to win wars. For me, Wellington's success is all the more sharper because of the flaws he overcomes. At Assaye he mismanaged the campaign right up until the battle itself. The mismanagement is down to Wellington's cultural interpretations and underestimation of his opponents. He believes the Marathas will fight in a certain way because they're 'Indians' so there are racial and cultural assumptions that he's getting wrong.

He also has a propensity to 'mirror-image' ie assuming that the enemy will behave as you will in the same circumstances. Just before what becomes the Burgos campaign, Wellington assumes that the French will fall back on defensive positions behind the River Ebro, because that's what he would do. In fact they take a completely different approach and despite being on the back foot they seize the initiative and attack on three flanks. He will also often trust his initiative more than the intelligence he receives, which can be a good thing in that intelligence can sometimes be flawed but on occasions it can be a very bad thing.

I think his flaws make him more human and he overcomes these problems to be able to manage an army and political strategy with the British government much more effectively than many British generals are able to do. For me, Wellington understands the political level more than any other general in history, with the possible exception of Marlborough and Alan Brooke.

**"PATIENCE DID NOT COME NATURALLY TO HIM AND HIS INSTINCTS WERE AGGRESSIVE, TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE, SEEK OUT THE ENEMY AND GIVE BATTLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE"**



***Right:** Wellington was painted by Francisco Goya in 1812-14, after he entered Madrid. His hollow eyes indicate the strains of long-term campaigning in the Peninsula*

*Images: Alamy, Mary Evans, Getty, Rex Features*

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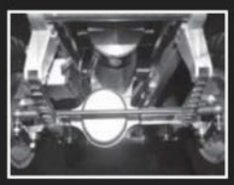

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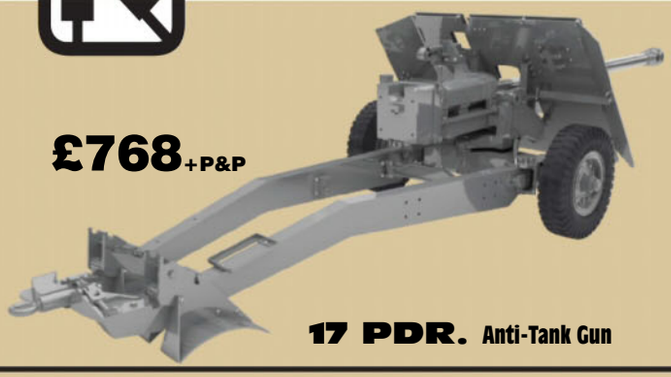

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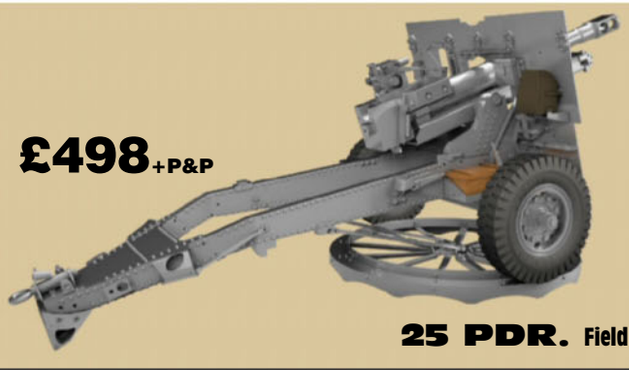

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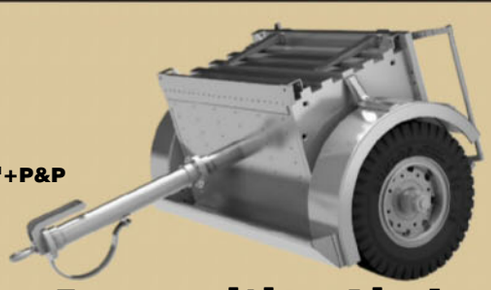

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# THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

WORDS ROBIN SCHÄFER

## In the spring of 1918, Erich Ludendorff launched what he hoped would be a decisive blow against Britain, winning final victory for Imperial Germany

By early 1918, after years of attritional warfare, the German Army High Command knew very well that its Heimatfront (home front) was on the brink of collapse. The strategy of unrestricted submarine warfare had failed; new British tactics at sea had made sure of that. Since the beginning of the year, American supply and arms deliveries to the Allies had reached a gigantic scale, and hundreds of thousands of US troops were disembarking in French harbours. In January 1918, though the German field army still numbered 5.1 million men, the only thing that could be realistically hoped for was the possibility to be able to strike a final blow so hard that it would force the Allies to the negotiating table, making them accept a cessation of hostilities on terms honourable and advantageous to the Germans.

The planning for a great offensive to achieve this aim in the west had already begun in November 1917, and the first thing that needed to be decided upon was location and target. The Germans knew that they lacked the strategic reserves to launch a decisive attack on the French, who by then fielded seven armies. Moreover, most of the terrain occupied by French forces was unsuitable for an offensive, providing the defenders with lots of room and cover to withdraw and reform. From the point of view of tactical skill and flexibility, the French army was considered to be a lot stronger than the British; launching an attack against them seemed to offer more chances of success.

The British were weakened by manpower shortages and spread thinly, and were supported by the inexperienced Portuguese. By getting around the flank of the British and cutting off their retreat, a significant percentage of the BEF could be destroyed and by doing so a 'simple' tactical victory could be turned into a decisive operational one. This would be the time to strike back.

> **"I object to the word 'operations'. We'll just blow a hole in the middle. The rest will follow of its own accord"**
>
> General Erich Ludendorff

*Stormtroopers charging across No Man's Land towards their objectives*

## Operation Michael

In January 1918, the Germans decided to attack on a 50-mile front, between the River Oise and Arras, in an operation code-named 'Michael'. Three separate armies would participate in the attack: the 2nd, 17th and 18th. The 2nd Army, commanded by General von der Marwitz, had participated in the counterattack at Cambrai in 1917. The 17th Army, under the command of General Otto von Below, was relatively new, but Below was a highly experienced commander who had led 14th Army in the hugely successful Caporetto offensive in 1917.

The 18th Army was commanded by Oskar von Hutier, a veteran of the war on the Eastern Front where he had headed the 2nd Army during the capture of Riga. These three, experienced commanders had one thing in common – each had won a spectacular victories in 1917 by incorporating new and innovative 'stormtroop' and artillery tactics.

To make sure they had the best possible troops to their disposal, all men over the age of 35 had been withdrawn from the units to stage the attack, their places filled by younger men from the Eastern Front. In an impressive feat of logistics and organisation, all units had been put through a rigorous programme, in which 56 divisions (about the strength of the entire BEF) were pulled out of the line to be given three weeks of intensive training. The troops practiced skirmish and assault troop tactics and were given time to hone their marksmanship skills on the firing ranges.

Nearly 10,000 artillery pieces and Minenwerfer (mine launchers) were amassed to prepare and support the offensive, about half of the entire German artillery strength in the west, by then the greatest force of artillery ever assembled at one place. Their first task was to support the increased number of trench-raids carried out in the first three months of 1918 and to gas Allied strong-points and artillery positions that were not to be attacked during the offensive. The purpose of the trench raids was to mask preparations and reduce Allied raiding activity – and with it the gathering of intelligence by the enemy.

On the night of 20 March 1918, 3,965 field guns, 2,643 heavy artillery pieces, 3,532 trench mortars, 82 squadrons of aircraft and 74 infantry divisions – a total of nearly 1.4 million German soldiers trained in the latest, state-of-the-art, offensive tactics stood ready for the attack. They would not fall merely upon General Gough's 5th Army, but also its northerly neighbour, the 3rd Army under command of General Byng. The Germans aimed to punch through and crush the salient at Flesquiéres, trapping any Tommy holding the line, after which they would charge west and southwest beyond the old battlefield of the Somme and on to Amiens.

By doing so they would drive a wedge between the British and the French with the hope of destroying either and perhaps even both in the process. The German commanders believed that victory was within reach.

The first written orders were handed to the regiments all along the line: "X-Day, March 21, H-Hour, 9.40 am." "Finally there will be revenge for four years of suffering and teeth-grinding endurance! At last we will be the hammer and no longer the anvil!" One German soldier enthused.

**"The superiority of the German Army has never been made clearer... Hour by hour I am marking new captured villages on the map. We champ at the bit and can't wait join the attack and to turn into trench fighters again. We hope that our turn will come soon and it won't take Tommy long to draw the necessary conclusions from his retreat in the north and south. An incredible sense of power is suddenly flowing through our veins. What tremendous fellows we are compared to the Tommy weaklings. How fantastic it is that Paris is finally getting it too – not long and our long-range guns will target London itself. Finally the boot is on the other foot, now it is us who have the superiority! Tommy is buckling down! What a joy it is to be a soldier!"**

Leutnant Alfred Splittgerber, 211th Reserve-Infantry-Regiment

## The Stoßtrupps charge

On 21 March 1918, at 4.40 am and without prior warning, nearly 10,000 German artillery pieces and mortars of all calibres opened a barrage of vehemence as yet unseen in the history of warfare. In less than five hours, 3.5 million shells, more than double the amount fired by the British artillery during the seven-day preliminary bombardment two years previous, smashed into the British positions along a 240 square-kilometre patch of the Somme.

When the lethal barrage finally lifted, the German field artillery and trench mortars opened a creeping barrage, a Feuerwalze, timed to move forwards 200 metres every four minutes. On their signal small teams of German assault troops, or Stoßtrupps, rose from their trenches and charged through the smoke and fog towards the British defensive positions. Within minutes they had infiltrated through the first defence lines and raced on to spread chaos and mayhem in the enemy's rear. Sturmblocks – larger battle groups of about 40 men formed on company and sometimes battalion level – followed these units. They were heavily armed with heavy weapons, machine guns, mortars and, as a novelty, modified field artillery pieces, which were dragged into action by the infantry and were under direct orders of the infantry commanders.

The holes these elite troops had blown into the British lines were then quickly exploited by the mass of the German regular infantry following shortly behind them. The stunned defenders had offered little, or no, resistance – the dam of the Allied defences had been breached and the Kaiser's 'field-greys' now poured through the gaps like a torrent of fire and steel. The British were in full retreat. Soon the German troops would reach the British artillery positions and the deadlock of trench warfare would be broken. In the following days, the German Army threw the Allies into disarray and made some spectacular territorial gains. Within days its leading elements had advanced nearly 65 kilometres into enemy territory and came close to capturing Amiens.

The Germans had taken 15 times the amount of ground the Allies had managed to seize from them in the two previous years – they seemed unstoppable. Fearing that the Germans might succeed in splitting the British and French forces, the Allies agreed to co-ordinate their efforts under the command of the French General Ferdinand Foch. Allied resistance stiffened and the Germans finally called off the attack on 5 April. What the Allies, at that point, did not realise was that the scale and speed of the German advance was also its nemesis. The stormtroopers were exhausted and too much had been asked of the ordinary German soldier.

Logistics and supply had broken down. Dedicated for years to a war of stagnation, it simply could not keep up with a war of movement. The German Army was making spectacular gains, but they were small victories and they were costing them dearly. Nearly 130,000 men had been lost – a number that would be hard to replace.

The depth of the German advance led to major problems, which German High Command had ignored or not foreseen. The battleground on which Michael was fought had already been

# ENTER THE A7V

### THE GERMAN ANSWER TO THE BRITISH LANDSHIP RUMBLED ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD IN 1918

During Operation Michael, 370 British tanks were spread out along the lines, of which about half saw action, most of them breaking down during the retreat. On the German side, the 36th Infantry-Division was supported by the 1st Sturm-Panzer-Kraftwagen-Abteilung (assault tank detachment), which fielded one German A7V tank and five captured British MkIVs. After about two years of development, the A7V was introduced in early 1918. Initially, 100 vehicles were ordered, but only 20 were delivered before the war ended.

They saw action from March to October 1918 and were the only tanks produced by Germany to be used in operations. The A7V's name was derived from that of its parent organisation, Allgemeines Kriegsdepartement, 7 Abteilung, Verkehrswesen (General War Department, 7th Branch, Transportation). German tank crews were a volunteer force, whose members came from a variety of army combat and logistics formations. Officers, drivers and mechanics mostly originated from motor transport troops, while gunners and loaders came from the artillery and machine-gunners from the infantry. In the German High Command (OHL), the traditional view prevailed that the infantry was the most versatile arm to force a breakthrough, especially the elite Sturmtruppen. Because of this, German doctrine considered the tank to be an auxiliary weapon that could overrun enemy strong points and deposit a contingent of assault infantry.

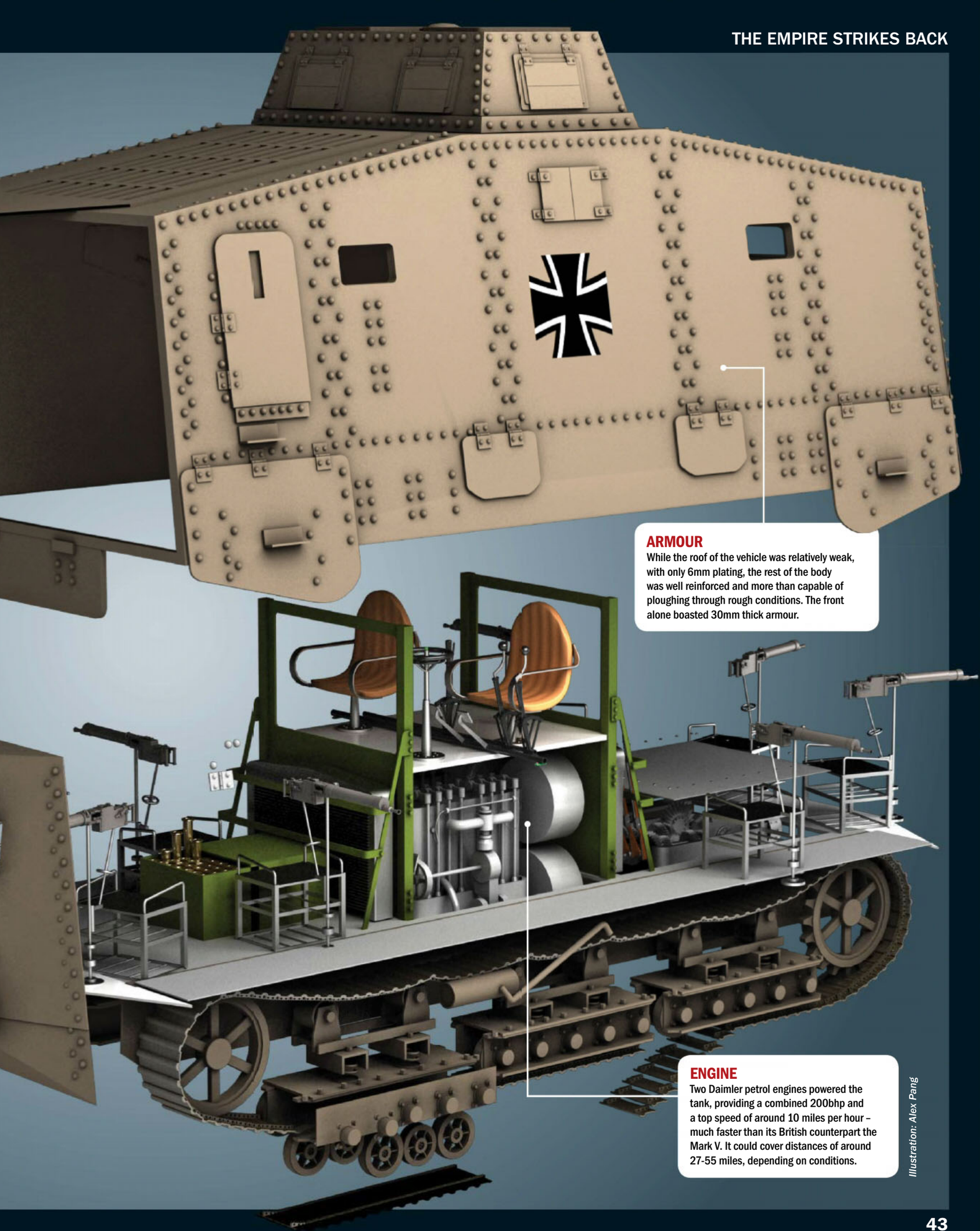
In its role as an infantry-fighting vehicle, the A7V, with its 16-man crew, could accommodate up to eight additional assault infantrymen. In addition to this, all German tank crews were trained to double as infantry should their vehicles be disabled or circumstances warrant it. With its front-mounted, quick-firing 57mm main gun, twice as many machine guns as the British Mark IV tank (which allowed for 360 degrees of fire), a narrow front profile and an ingenious internal signal-light arrangement, the A7V was able to hold its own during battlefield engagements. Nevertheless, it suffered from serious design flaws. Little ground clearance made cross-country movement a difficult task, and the engine was prone to overheating and mechanical breakdowns were common.

The mass of the armoured punch in the German Army came in the form of captured British tanks. Shortly after the Battle of Cambrai, German troops began to salvage large numbers of them from the battlefield and brought them to Charleroi, where they were repaired, refurbished and re-armed with Belgian 57mm Maxim-Nordenfeldt guns, German MG 08 machine guns and equipped with new sights. As the original British engines made by William Foster & Co were licence built Daimler engines, replacements and parts were delivered and made by Daimler in Berlin. On 28 September 1918, a total of 35 captured tanks were reported to be operational while by the end of 1918 the number had risen to 75. In total around 170 British tanks were captured by the German army to be re-used or cannibalised for parts.

**ARMAMENT**

Mounted at the front of the A7V was the 57mm Maxim-Nordenfelt gun, which was capable of up to 25 rounds per minute. Six additional 7.5mm Maxim guns could also be fitted around the tank, providing 360 degrees of fire.


***Below:** Unidentified A7V tank on the training grounds near Reims in summer 1918*



### ARMOUR

While the roof of the vehicle was relatively weak, with only 6mm plating, the rest of the body was well reinforced and more than capable of ploughing through rough conditions. The front alone boasted 30mm thick armour.

### ENGINE

Two Daimler petrol engines powered the tank, providing a combined 200bhp and a top speed of around 10 miles per hour – much faster than its British counterpart the Mark V. It could cover distances of around 27-55 miles, depending on conditions.

*Illustration: Alex Pang*

# STURMBATAILLON

## GERMANY'S NEW SOLDIER PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

The first official German stormtroop unit was authorised on 2 March 1915 when the Supreme Command of the field army ordered VIII Corps to form a detachment for the testing of experimental weapons and the development of approximate tactics that could break the deadlock on the Western Front. It was founded by Major Calsow (Calsow Assault Detachment) and later commanded and refined by Hauptmann Willy Rohr (Sturmabteilung Rohr). The methods Rohr developed are the basis of all modern small-unit infantry tactics. By the end of 1916, 30 German divisions had established a Sturmbataillon (battalion of shock troops). Even the navy had formed a detachment.

By 1918 a textbook Stormtroop attack would be opened by a short but intense artillery barrage, employing high-explosive and shrapnel shells mixed with a large number of poison gas projectiles. The bombardment was to neutralise the enemy front lines and stun the defenders. Then, following a creeping barrage, small groups of Stoß- or Sturmtruppen would move forward in dispersed order, infiltrating enemy defences at weak points, destroying command and communication centres, artillery positions and avoiding combat whenever possible.

The Stoßtrupps were followed by larger, heavily armed Sturmblocks, heavy weapon teams armed with machine-guns, flamethrowers and infantry guns, which would target narrow fronts and strong points in the enemy lines with the aim to accelerate and support the breakthrough of the regular infantry following behind them. Having to act and react in a rapid manner the assault troopers had to be able to act on their own initiative and to rely on their own physical and mental abilities. To achieve this, only the youngest and strongest men were selected to serve in the ranks for the Sturmbataillon.

Whereas in 1915 assault detachments had experimented with body armour, steel shields and heavy weaponry, it was soon realised that speed and agility was more important. In combat individual stormtroopers were mostly armed with short carbines, knifes, sharpened spades and lots of hand grenades, carrying modified sandbags full of them into action. NCOs and officers armed themselves with rapid-fire pistols, like the Mauser C96 or the P08 Luger, outfitted with shoulder stocks and high capacity magazines. Only the support teams used light machine guns and other heavy weapons to cover the advancing squads.

**"I had got together some kit appropriate to the sort of work I was meant to be doing: across my chest, two sandbags, each containing four stick grenades, impact fuses on the left, delay on the right, in my right tunic pocket an 08 pistol on a long cord, in my right trouser pocket a little Mauser pistol, in my left tunic pocket five egg hand-grenades, in the left trouser pocket luminous compass and whistle, in my belt spring hooks for pulling out the pins, plus bowie knife and wire-cutters[...] We had removed shoulder straps and Gibraltar badges, so as to give our opponents no clue as to our regiment. For identification, we had a white band round each arm"**

Leutnant Ernst Jünger, 73rd Fusilier-Regiment

*A young stormtrooper in March 1918*

*The Bergmann MP 18, also known as the Grabenfeger (trench sweeper), was the first practical submachine gun used in combat. Highly effective it was first issued to assault units in limited numbers in 1918*

destroyed twice during 1916–17: there were no roads to advance with or to bring forward supplies. Added to that the German Army had wantonly disregarded the production and commissioning of lorries – a problem that was aggravated further by the British Naval Blockade, which had made the import of rubber from overseas almost impossible.

It was this lack of motorised transport, overstretched supply lines and a lack of infrastructure that had brought the German attack to a standstill. It is often claimed that the offensive stalled when starved and exhausted German soldiers fell upon British supply dumps and filled their bellies with corned beef and alcohol instead of advancing further against their enemy. While it is indeed true that they were amazed and overawed by the amount and quality of food and supplies available to the foe – and that they filled their pockets and rucksacks to the brim with tinned meats, sugar, cigarettes and brandy – German commanders never lost control over their men.

## Further operations

On 9 April, the Germans attacked again. The assault, known to them as Operation Georgette, came just south of the battlefield of Ypres. Using the same combined-arms tactics, 14 German divisions smashed through the Allied lines and quickly overwhelmed the British and Portuguese opposing them. Again, however, the offensive quickly stalled, this time also due to a more flexible British defence. On 27 May 1918, the Germans, much to the surprise of everyone, launched their final successful offensive, Operation Blücher-Yorck, across the ridge of the Chemin des Dames. 29 German divisions participated in the attack, 13 of them in the first wave. By 29 May, they had taken Soisson and were making towards the Marne. When they arrived there by 5 June only 50 kilometres separated the Germans from the outskirts of Paris. It took the combined efforts of fresh British, French and American troops to slowly grind the attack to a halt.

*British prisoners of war during Operation Georgette*

The Germans had lost about 125,000 men – the French a staggering 167,000, the British 28,703 and the Americans about 11,000. On 6 June, the offensive was called off by Ludendorff. Operation Gneisenau, known to the Germans as the Schlacht an der Matz, ran from 9-13 June in the area of Noyon-Montdidier. This time the French offered stiff resistance from the start and from the 11 June onwards hardly any ground was gained by the Germans. The final German offensive, Operation Marneschutz-Reims failed to achieve any mentionable effect.

When, on 18 July, the Allies launched their great counteroffensive at the Marne, the Allied armies were now bolstered by the newly arrived Americans. The German operations had ruptured the Allied lines on a broad front for the first time in over three years, but these tactical successes failed to cripple the Allied efforts in northern France quickly, and force a favourable armistice. Forced to retreat behind the Aisne, Germany had forever lost the game of numbers, it was now exhausted in the field, as well as at home.

**"Everywhere Tommy is on the retreat and hopefully we will throw him back into the sea! In the fields the dead lie where they have fallen, rifle still in hand and I can't stop thinking that soon many German and English mothers will be crying"**

Leutnant Rudolf Scholder, 37th Foot Artillery Battalion

*German Stoßtrupp in action*

# IMJIN RIVER

KOREA 22-25 APRIL 1951

In 1951, a brigade of United Nations soldiers fought a desperate battle against overwhelming odds that ultimately helped secure the freedom of South Korea – among them was Lance Bombardier Tommy Clough

WORDS TOM GARNER

It is April 1951, and a British artilleryman sits on a hill, patiently waiting for battle to begin. His officer hands him a pair of binoculars, points to a spot on a map and says, "Look over there." The soldier peers through the lenses and spots a small gap between two hills. He can't believe what he is seeing – thousands of soldiers, like a mass of ants, advancing across the landscape. Seeing his subordinate gasp, the officer asks, "What do you see?"

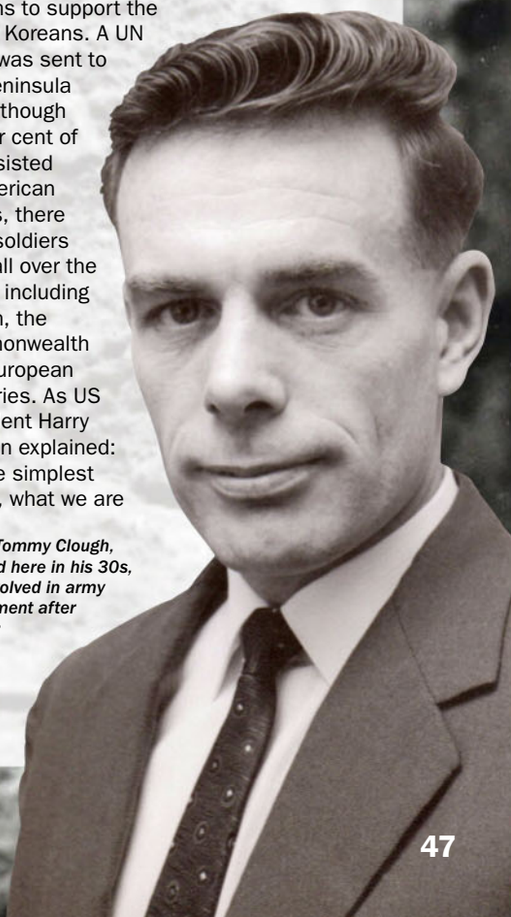
"I don't really know what I'm looking at."

"That's the enemy."

The soldier in question was Lance-Bombardier Tommy Clough, and in 1951 he was only 19-years old but was already an experienced regular soldier in the British Army. What he had seen was a huge Chinese army raining down on his outnumbered position. The following clash would be become known as the Battle of Imjin River, a brutal fight that would help to determine the course of one of the most wrongfully forgotten conflicts in modern history: the Korean War (1950-53).

## Preventing world war

The Korean War was the occasion when the Cold War went 'hot'. In the aftermath of WWII, the USA and Soviet Union were former allies but they deeply mistrusted each other, particularly with the advent of nuclear weapons. Consequently, they looked to globally control 'spheres of influence' with one of the unstable areas being Korea. This was partitioned along the 38th Parallel into the communist North Korea and the US-backed South Korea. War broke out when North Korea invaded the south in June 1950, which then prompted the newly formed United Nations to support the South Koreans. A UN force was sent to the peninsula and although 88 per cent of it consisted of American troops, there were soldiers from all over the world, including Britain, the Commonwealth and European countries. As US President Harry Truman explained: "In the simplest terms, what we are



***Right:** Tommy Clough, pictured here in his 30s, was involved in army recruitment after the war*

doing in Korea is this: we are trying to prevent a third world war."

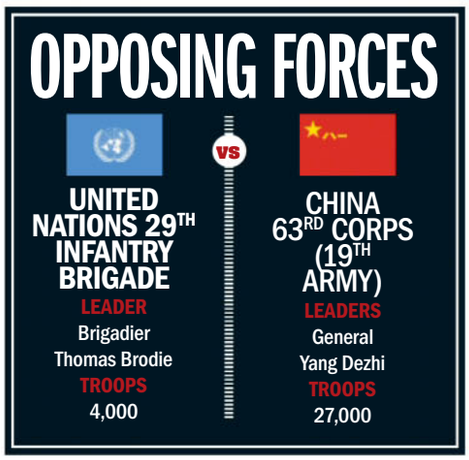
The war dramatically seesawed. Initially the North Koreans captured the South Korean capital of Seoul and almost forced the UN out. In September 1950, the South Koreans and the UN were reinforced and in the following offensive they crossed the 38th Parallel, captured Pyongyang and reached the Chinese border. This rapid advance caused the communist Chinese to side with the North Koreans and they attacked in great strength. The UN was thrown back during a freezing winter and the Chinese captured Seoul. The UN again reorganised and recaptured the capital in March 1951, which had by this time been ruined by four conquests in one year. The UN then dug in near the 38th Parallel and aimed to create buffer zone north of the capital and in April the Chinese launched a spring offensive with the intention of finally retaking Seoul.

## Distant, but brutal

For young soldiers like Tommy Clough, Korea was a baptism of fire. Born in 1931 Clough had joined the British Army aged 14 and trained as a gunner in the Royal Artillery. However, his extreme youth was irrelevant for military life: "As soon as you put on a uniform you were regarded as a man and certainly not as a boy soldier," he recalls. Clough was promoted to lance-bombardier before a distant conflict took over his life: "I had visions of a bright future and suddenly the war started in Korea. We didn't take much notice as it was thousands of miles away. I looked at my mates and said, 'Where the hell is Korea?' We didn't even know where it was on a map." When Clough embarked on a troopship from Southampton he thought he wouldn't be gone long: "We were full of it, going to war and being the heroes, but we'd heard rumours that the war would be over before we got there, but of course that didn't happen. I'd never been further than Southport before! It was a great adventure and we were in a happy mood."

After a six-week journey the mood changed before he disembarked in November 1950: "There was a strange smell coming off the shore and we asked the crew what it was. They said, 'That's Korea.' In those days they used human excreta for manure, which they spread on the paddies so it was a smell we had to get used to." Despite being welcomed by the Koreans on the dockside Clough soon discovered that Korea did not meet expectations: "When you think of the Far East you think of tropics but Korea is very cold and we had no winter kit at all."

Conditions were so cold that the antifreeze in the British army vehicles froze but Clough was most appalled by the condition of the Koreans themselves on his way north to the 38th Parallel: "What was so pitiful was all the refugees. It was really awful to see




because they'd been initially shoved down by the invasion of the North and then when we pushed back they drifted about not knowing what the outcome was going to be. There were atrocities committed by Koreans on both sides. The country was desolate. I saw terrible sights during that time and even the old sweats who had been through Europe or been prisoners of the Japanese thought conditions in Korea were worse than they'd seen anywhere else."

The Chinese entry into the war was almost dismissed: "We'd heard rumours that the Chinese were going to be coming in but they were just rumours. We didn't exactly laugh them


*British soldiers, who would go on to fight at Imjin River, embark for Korea, 1950*

*US soldiers made up the majority of the UN forces in Korea and fought side by side with the British*

off but nobody seemed to take them seriously. But then it started when the Americans captured some strange-looking troops who weren't North Korean and then we knew."

## The 'Glosters'

Throughout his Korean service, Clough was in the UN 29th Infantry Brigade as part of 170th Independent Mortar Battery, which was armed with 4.2 mortars, the smallest guns in the Royal Artillery. The battery was split into three 'troops' of 30-32 men, and each was assigned to support an infantry battalion. 29th Brigade comprised of four battalions including the first battalions of the Royal Ulster Rifles, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, the Gloucestershire Regiment and a Belgian battalion. Clough's mortar troop was assigned to the Gloucestershire Regiment, which was better known as the 'Glosters' and although he was an artilleryman Clough's troop was an integral part of the battalion: "I was attached to the Glosters the entire time. Mainly, wherever the Glosters went, we went. You became part of them really."

Clough was also proud to be part of a UN force: "It was the first time the United Nations had fought together. It was good for us because we had the backing of the world, if you like. We were sometimes called upon to support the Belgians so we all backed each other up." 29th Brigade arrived at the front in early December 1950, and took part in the UN withdrawal as the Chinese crossed the Imjin River but a counteroffensive was launched in February 1951 and the Glosters led a successful assault against Hill 327 (landscape features were numbered by their height in metres).

Clough was in the thick of the fighting and was caught up in an incident of friendly fire when a UN shell accidentally landed on the Glosters: "Suddenly somebody shouted, 'Incoming!' and normally everybody throws themselves on the ground but I was loaded with two big batteries on my back. If I had dived on the ground I would have broken my neck so I just lowered myself. The shell landed right in the middle of a 45th Field Artillery observation post. I'd never seen this before or since, it looked like a war film. There was a massive explosion and bodies rose up in the air in slow motion and then back on the ground before everything fell quiet. There were bits and pieces everywhere." The explosion killed a British soldier and Clough still honours his memory: "These things happened all the time. Every time I go back to Korea I go to that man's grave."

## "Just another river"

By April, 29th Brigade was back on the Imjin and the battalions were positioned on hilltops south of the river. The front was more suited for a division than a brigade but the positions were meant to be temporary and no wires or

### TOMMY CLOUGH

**Born in 1931 Tommy Clough joined the British Army aged 14 at the end of WWII and trained in the Royal Artillery. He was posted to Korea in 1950 and was attached to the Gloucestershire (Glosters) Regiment as part of 170th Independent Mortar Battery. Clough fought to take Hill 327 north of Seoul and then took part in the Battle of Imjin River, where he fought with the Glosters on Hill 235 (now known as Gloster Hill). He was captured and remained a prisoner of war until September 1953 when he was released. Along with the Glosters, Clough was awarded the US Presidential Unit Citation for his actions at Imjin River and was discharged in 1977. Clough did not retire until he was 74 years old and now lives in Gloucester. He returned to South Korea in April 2016 for the 65th anniversary commemorations of the battle.**

*Tommy Clough in South Korea, April 2016*

**"THERE WAS A MASSIVE EXPLOSION AND BODIES ROSE UP IN THE AIR IN SLOW MOTION AND THEN BACK ON THE GROUND BEFORE EVERYTHING FELL QUIET. THERE WERE BITS AND PIECES EVERYWHERE"**

mines were laid. Behind the infantry were the tanks of the 8th Hussars and 25-pounder guns belonging to 45th Field Regiment. There was no medium or heavy artillery support and the battalions were too widely dispersed to help each other. Clough and his comrades didn't feel that they were anywhere special: "At the time it was just another river to us but it formed a kind of barrier. There were big gaps between companies and battalions. To say we were overstretched was an understatement."

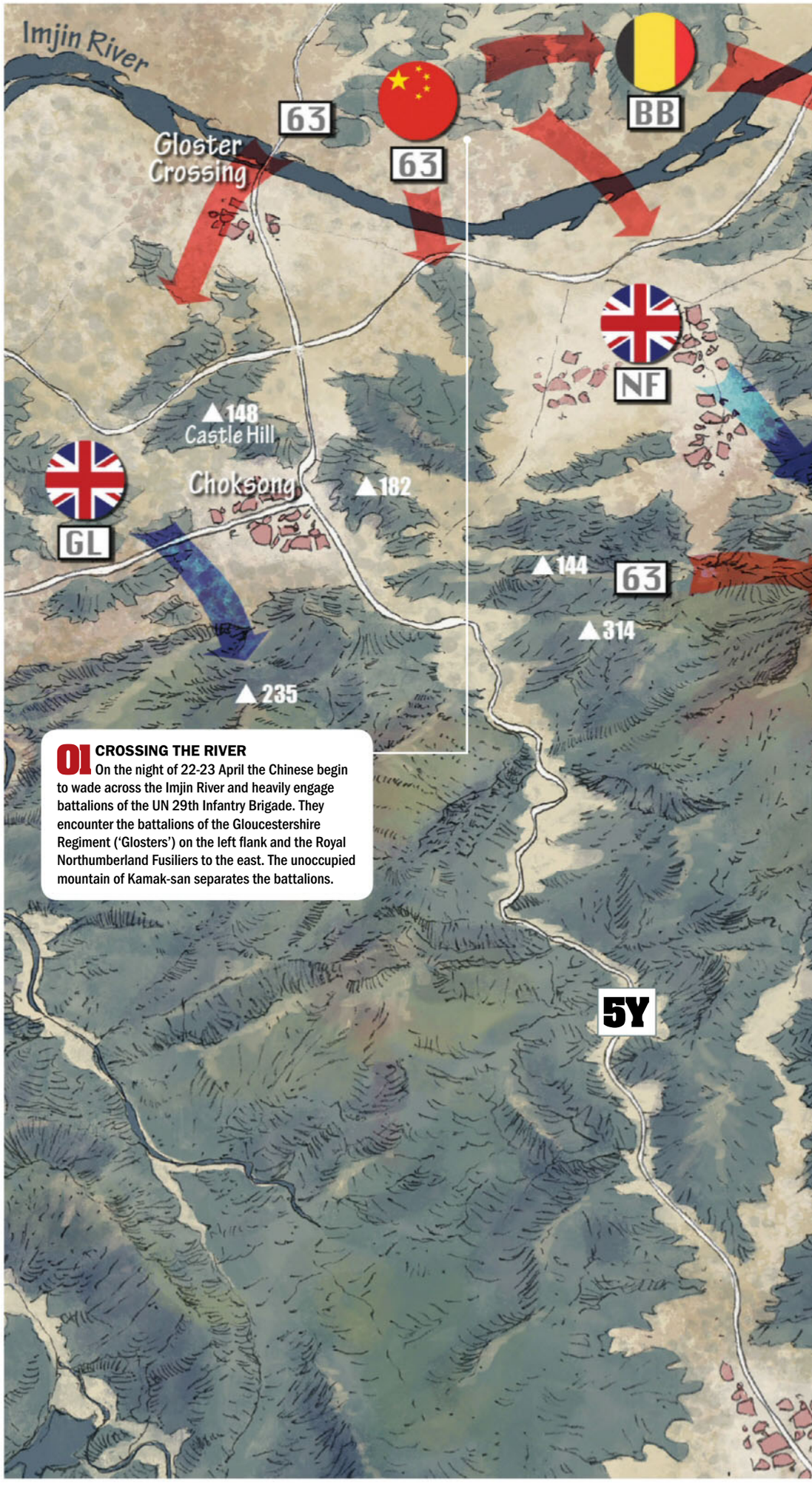
Clough had also been disconcerted by the quietness on the approach to the river: "We'd been out of touch with the Chinese. Patrols had been sent over two to three miles and we were trying to see where the Chinese were and what their strength was. We didn't see a soul but it turned out that they had been watching us. Then, on 22 April, the brown stuff hit the fan!"

The Chinese had indeed been conducting diligent reconnaissance and knew the positions of 29th Brigade and the gaps between its units. At its maximum the brigade numbered 4,000 men, but the large gaps meant that each battalion would have to fight individual battles. This included less than 700 Glosters but the Chinese offensive involved 300,000 troops across a 64-kilometre front and, in the sector where 29th Brigade were positioned, around 27,000 men were about to rain down upon them.

The battle began on the night of 22 April when the Chinese 63rd Corps began to wade across the river. Clough was positioned on a feature called 'Castle Hill' and knew the enemy were coming: "The Chinese were not very good at night discipline and [the other battalions] could hear them chattering away. They sent a flare up and caught the Chinese red-handed in the middle of the river and opened up." Clough was kept busy firing his mortar on night-time positions: "During the night we fired on 'defensive targets' where we fired on targets that the enemy were most likely to be during the day. If you thought they were there you'd send a flare up and bring fire down on them. It was weird at first because when they tried to break through over the river it was fairly sporadic and then of course they came over in very large numbers."

During the first day, Clough first saw the mass of Chinese soldiers through his officer's binoculars and then returned to his mortar position: "One of the gunners, who hadn't been able to see them said, 'Are there many of them?' and I didn't know what the hell to say because I didn't want to scare him. All I said was, 'Quite a few.' Understatements were the rule of the day! I was shit-scared, I'd never seen anything like it. I thought, 'God we really are in it', especially as I knew the gaps in our position. I remember thinking, 'We're never going to be able to stop them.' I didn't betray my fear back at the mortars, I just got on with it because there was nothing I could do."

The mortars were kept busy: "We were doing our best and we kept firing and firing until the barrels were glowing red-hot, which was very dangerous. The mortar crews held competitions with each other to see how many they could get in the air before the first one exploded. There was no shortage of casualties on the Chinese side, we killed hundreds of them and still they kept coming."




**01 CROSSING THE RIVER**
On the night of 22-23 April the Chinese begin to wade across the Imjin River and heavily engage battalions of the UN 29th Infantry Brigade. They encounter the battalions of the Gloucestershire Regiment ('Glosters') on the left flank and the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers to the east. The unoccupied mountain of Kamak-san separates the battalions.


**03 29TH BRIGADE REDEPLOYS**
The Chinese go to ground to avoid UN airstrikes, which allows the Royal Ulster Rifles to occupy a hill east of the Fusiliers. This guards Route 11, the only escape route. Elsewhere the Belgian Battalion fights its way across the river and redeploys in the south.

**02 THE GLOSTERS OCCUPY HILL 235**
At dawn on 23 April, the Glosters are forced into a decreasing perimeter on Hill 235. X Company of the Northumberland Fusiliers are overrun on their hilltop. The Chinese occupy Kamak-san and force the 45th Field Artillery southwards. Centurion tanks of the 8th Hussars move up to evacuate the wounded.


**04 THE BATTALIONS HOLD OUT**
During the night of 23-24 April, Chinese reinforcements cross the river and attempt to eliminate the Glosters who are surrounded and subjected to repeat assaults and artillery fire but keep fighting during the day. The Northumberland Fusiliers and the Ulster Rifles also throw off repeated attacks.

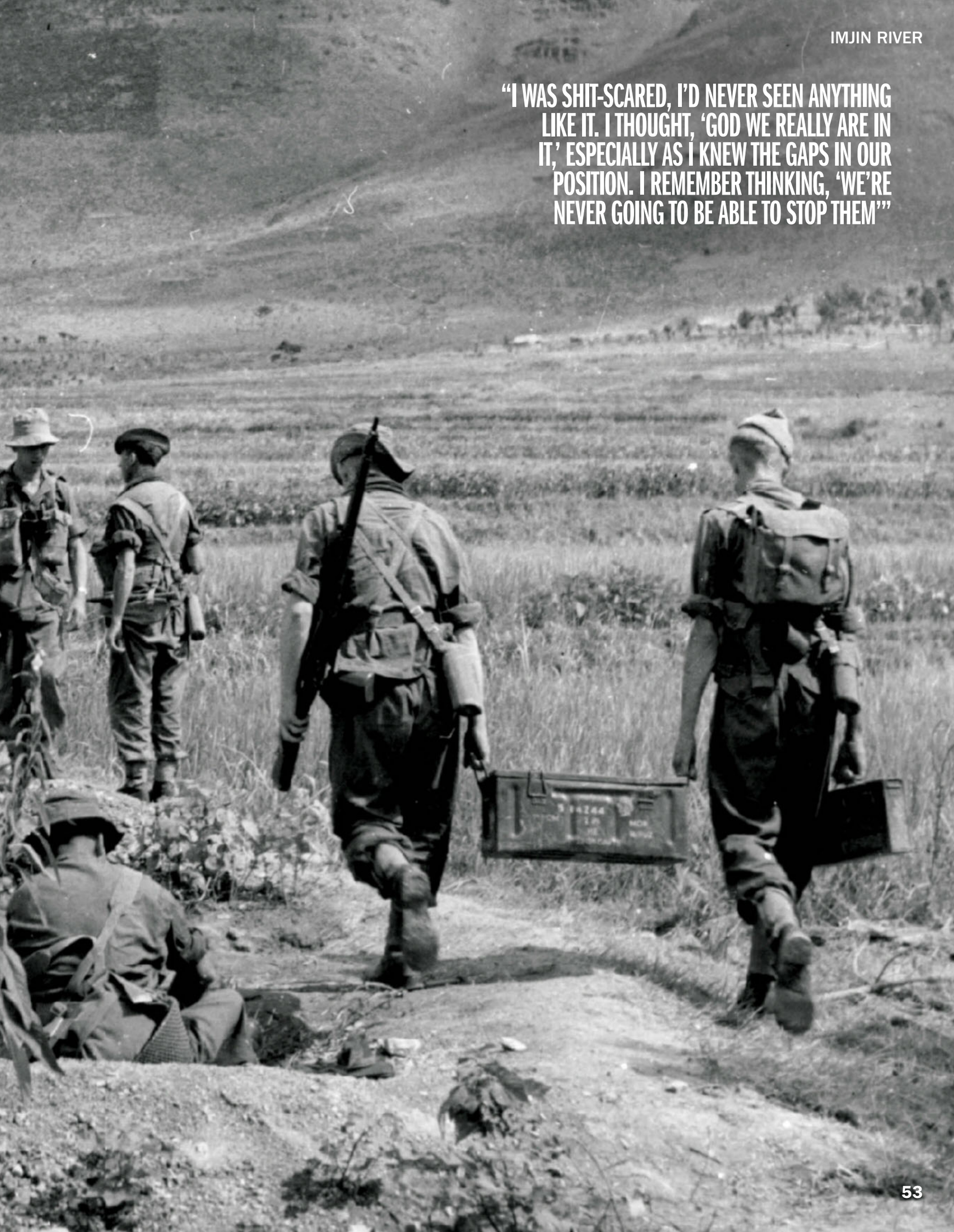
**05 MIST AND TANK ATTACKS**
At dawn on 25 April, a valley mist allows the Chinese to infiltrate between the UN positions undetected. The 8th Hussars tanks advance up to the head of the valley but become bogged down and attacked by Chinese sticky bombs.

**06 BEGINNING OF THE END**
At mid-morning the order is given for 29th Brigade to withdraw. The exhausted soldiers are forced to march along Route 11 to safety. The Northumberland Fusiliers withdraw under the covering fire of tanks while the Ulster Rifles march southeast over hills.

**07 A SLOW ESCAPE**
The brigade withdrawal goes slowly and many of the wounded are loaded onto the back of tanks. The Chinese sweep down along the west of the valley to intercept the UN but are unable to prevent them escaping. The armoured rearguard covers the retreat firing into the approaching Chinese.

**08 THE GLOSTERS' LAST STAND**
The Glosters are the last to withdrawal from the battle. On the night of 24-25 April they receive permission to withdraw but they are completely surrounded. After trying to escape down the south slope of Hill 235 they are mostly captured by the Chinese. Only 40 Glosters reach safety.

*Newly arrived British forces get some rest near Taegu before moving fowards to the fronline, 1950*



"I WAS SHIT-SCARED, I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT. I THOUGHT, 'GOD WE REALLY ARE IN IT,' ESPECIALLY AS I KNEW THE GAPS IN OUR POSITION. I REMEMBER THINKING, 'WE'RE NEVER GOING TO BE ABLE TO STOP THEM'"

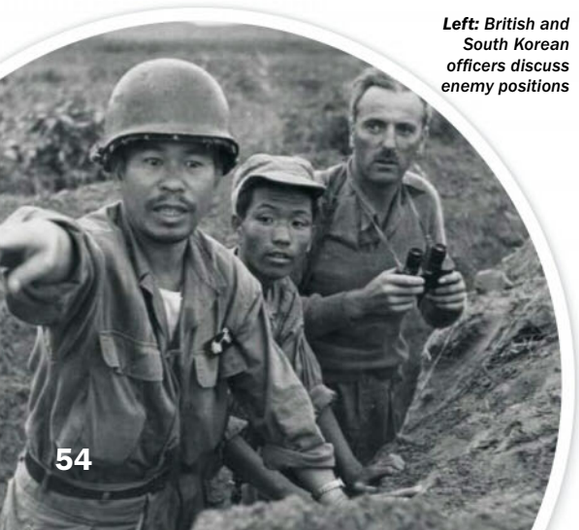
Clough and the Glosters were heavily engaged on the left flank of the UN line, as were the Northumberland Fusiliers to the east. A mountain called Kamak-san, which the British had not occupied and would soon be controlled by the Chinese, separated the battalions. Although accounts of the battle usually concentrate on the role of the Glosters, Clough is keen to emphasise that other battalions suffered and fought bravely: "The Northumberlands, Ulsters and Belgians managed to back out of the battle but they lost an enormous amount of men, there was one hell of a battle going on. To our left we had a South Korean battalion who held on as long as they could before they were pushed back. To our right was the rest of the brigade and they were fighting just as hard as we were."

## Hill 235

By first light on 23 April, the Glosters were being forced into an ever-diminishing perimeter on Hill 235 in the centre of the battle while a company of Fusiliers was overrun on its hilltop. Hill 235 became the location for the Glosters' fierce fight against over 10,000 Chinese troops. The hill itself was a forbidding place as it was almost perpendicular on three sides with only the south side having a climbable slope: "We had to carry as much ammunition and water as we could. That hill, 235, still gives me the creeps. However we had to get up and take our mortar barrels with us. These barrels were bloody heavy and they were four foot long and usually drawn on wheels." Despite being cumbersome, Clough wouldn't leave them behind: "The reason we took them was twofold. One was that the Chinese couldn't use them but also in the Royal Artillery our guns are our colours. We don't carry flags, we carry guns. It was a point of honour to take our guns with us."

Elsewhere the Chinese occupied Kamak-san, which forced the supporting guns of the 45th Field Artillery to withdraw south. Centurion tanks of the 8th Hussars then moved up to support the infantry and evacuate the wounded. To avoid UN airstrikes, the Chinese briefly went to ground, which enabled the Ulsters to occupy Hill 398 and Route 11, the only escape road for the brigade. The Belgian battalion, fought its way from the north side of the river and redeployed in the south.

During the night of 23-24 April, the Chinese continued to cross the Imjin and aimed to eliminate the Glosters: "We were now stuck on Hill 235 but we weren't there for long because the Chinese obviously wanted to dislodge us. We were a thorn in their side. We had control of the main supply route, which was a road leading south. We didn't know it at the time but where we were was a traditional invasion route from ancient times. The Chinese were using it as the least hilly path to get to Seoul."



***Left:** British and South Korean officers discuss enemy positions*

Consequently, the Glosters were increasingly isolated: "Things were going badly. We were being hard pressed on all four sides. We knew the Chinese were getting behind us and that the Americans couldn't get through to us. The lead Centurion tank sent to help us got knocked out and it blocked the other tanks. We were ordered to hang on for as long we could, which we did. The Glosters fought like trapped tigers for three long days and nights." The battle was turning nightmarish and the situation led to an infamous exchange of allied miscommunication. At brigade headquarters the British Brigadier Thomas Brodie was radioed by his American superiors about the battle's progress. He replied, "It's a bit sticky." The Americans, who misinterpreted British understatement, failed to understand the message as desperate and consequently did not send the appropriate help for 29th Brigade.

Looking back, Clough is more direct but magnanimous: "If had been me I'd have said, 'We're right in the shit!' None of us blamed [Brodie] afterwards, it was just our way of doing things. He obviously hadn't had much experience of Americans because they took it literally. Being, 'a bit sticky' didn't sound too bad." Despite the Americans misjudgment, Clough has fond memories of them: "Typically of the Brits, we scrounged off the Americans who were very generous. If they'd got something they'd give it to you. At the time in Korea, if you had a couple of bottles of whisky you could get a Jeep, no questions asked."

Back on Hill 235, resources were minimal: "Conditions were pretty grim because we had no food but we weren't interested in that. We were mostly interested in water and ammunition. Water is essential and it was running low. The Glosters and us sent a party down to our vehicles, which were parked below. We ransacked them, got what we could and ran back up the hill. We managed to get enough ammunition, which would last about a day. We had a lot of wounded, some of them critical and a lot of dying men."

At this point in the battle Captain Anthony Farrar-Hockley called in a UN airstrike against an opposing hill that was occupied by the Chinese. What Clough witnessed next was an early example of a napalm attack: "I can remember it to this very day and can see it almost. I heard these F-80 jets come in line behind me and before they got to us they dropped their napalm. I thought, 'Oh no, not again,' thinking it was another blue-on-blue situation, but the momentum of the jets carried the bombs over our heads and smack onto the hill where the Chinese were. Although it was brilliant warfare, it was horrendous to smell the napalm and flesh burning and to hear the screams. I felt awfully sorry for the Chinese because it was a terrible weapon."

## "Down to the last round"

The airstrike gave the Glosters a few more hours to fight but the end was approaching. Attempts to reinforce them on 24 April failed but the Glosters, Fusiliers and Ulsters fought on


***Unveiled in London in 2014, the Korean War memorial remembers the men who gave their lives in the conflict***

**"ALTHOUGH IT WAS BRILLIANT WARFARE, IT WAS HORRENDOUS TO SMELL THE NAPALM AND FLESH BURNING AND TO HEAR THE SCREAMS. I FELT AWFULLY SORRY FOR THE CHINESE"**

***Above, right:*** *After fighting their way out of the encirclement, the Glosters take up a new defensive position*
***Below:*** *Members of the Middlesex 'Die-hards' return home via Southampton, 1952*

*Enthusiastic British reinforcements head for Korea to bring depleated units back up to strength*

and even directed their artillery fire on their own positions. By mid-morning on 25 April the order was given to withdraw. The Fusiliers, Ulsters and Belgians retreated with difficulty, often with the wounded loaded onto the backs of tanks. Nevertheless, they managed to escape, unlike the Glosters who were completely encircled on the battlefield.

Clough recalled the moment of attempted departure: "The word got around that we were leaving. I remember saying to my mate, 'This'll be something to talk about in the pub!' Although we were surrounded and fighting for our lives we never gave up. I gave a grenade to every sergeant in front of a gun and told them to put them down the barrel in order to scupper the chances of the Chinese using them. As one of our sergeants did it his head exploded, he was hit by a sniper."

After this grim incident the Glosters were forced to leave their wounded behind and ran down the hill: "The Chinese were picking us off as we went. We carried on down this valley and the troop commander said, 'Spread out!' because if you're grouped together you're a bigger target. I looked up a slope and there were two machine-gunners, with one standing and pointing down at us. I'm not an infantryman but by pure instinct I brought my rifle up, fired one shot and this chap who was pointing at us went down."

The end was near: "I heard a shout from my left, 'Don't shoot!' At this point I realised we weren't fighting our way out. We were almost out of ammunition; most of the infantrymen were literally down to the last round. In the end, we were throwing rocks at them. The Chinese only put up with that because they thought they were grenades but they soon realised the rocks weren't exploding! At that point I stripped my rifle, took the bolt out, tried to smash it against a rock and threw it away. About ten minutes later the Chinese came down and we were prisoners. The first thing they did was strip us of anything they could lay their hands on. I managed to hide my watch, but I won't tell you where!"

## "Fighting for freedom"

Clough would spend the next two years in appalling conditions as a POW before being released as part of the armistice that ended the conflict in 1953. Imjin River had been a hugely costly for all concerned. 29th Brigade lost a quarter of its strength, suffering 1,091 casualties, including 622 of the Glosters, most of whom were captured but 59 were killed. Only 40 Glosters escaped the carnage. As part of the wider battle along the front the Americans lost 1,500 and the South Koreans 8,000 but by far the highest casualties incurred were on the Chinese side.

Estimates vary but it's reckoned that Chinese casualties possibly numbered 70,000, with 63rd Corps losing 40 per cent of it men against 29th Brigade. Clough says of the Chinese: "They were a very dangerous foe. They were almost fanatical as if they didn't care whether they were killed or not. We did well to stop them really but we were also convinced that most of the enemy were literally cannon fodder and they just threw them in."

Although it was not immediately obvious, the resistance of 29th Brigade allowed the UN to regroup and block the Chinese advance on Seoul and the offensive turned into a stalemate. The Chinese and North Koreans never retook Seoul and this highlighted the fact that they could no longer defeat the UN in battle. Peace negotiations began on 10 July 1951 but an armistice was not agreed until 27 July 1953.

In the long run Imjin River helped to save South Korea from communist dictatorship as Clough explains: "At the time you're in a battle and all you see is what's in front of you. Until we came back in 1953, we weren't aware how crucial that battle was. We knew that Seoul was 30 miles behind us and had the Chinese got past us it was fairly open ground. I'm not saying the Chinese couldn't have succeeded but they didn't. They never launched an attack on the same scale for the rest of the war. They lost so many at Imjin, we had slaughtered them."

Today, Clough is part of a dwindling band of British survivors but is proud of what 29th Brigade achieved: "We did our best, that was good to know. That's why the Koreans are so grateful to see us when we come back, kids come up and give us high-fives!"

However the war is sadly largely forgotten in the West, which Clough believes should be redressed: "WWII was exactly what it said, a 'world war'. Korea was a glitch and many thousands of miles away but there were more killed in three years fighting than ten years in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's why I'm willing to talk to anybody because there are only a handful of us left. You will find most of us veterans will open up because we want people to remember it. I know it sounds like an old cliché but we were defending freedom and that's what we were fighting for."

## FURTHER READING

- SCORCHED EARTH, BLACK SNOW. BRITAIN AND AUSTRALIA IN THE KOREAN WAR BY **ANDREW SALMON**
- THE EDGE OF THE SWORD. THE CLASSIC ACCOUNT OF WARFARE & CAPTIVITY IN KOREA BY **ANTHONY FARRAR-HOCKLEY**
- TO THE LAST ROUND: THE EPIC BRITISH STAND ON THE IMJIN RIVER, KOREA 1951 BY **ANDREW SALMON**
- CAPTURED AT THE IMJIN RIVER: THE KOREAN WAR MEMOIRS OF A GLOSTER BY **DAVID GREEN**

*Images: Alamy, Getty*

# ORIGINS OF THE NAVY SEALS

This legendary outfit has an illustrious history dating back to the elite divers who cleared mines on the D-Day beaches

WORDS **LEIGH NEVILLE**

From the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, to the rescuing of aid workers in Somalia, the SEALs typify the cutting edge of modern special operations. Their very name hints at their capabilities (SEa, Air and Land), with operators capable of covertly inserting by parachute, ground vehicle, small boat or sub. They are best known as a direct action force, rescuing hostages and capturing or killing 'high value targets'. However, this role has evolved over a storied history dating back to World War II.

The earliest descendants of the modern-day SEAL were Navy divers trained to conduct some of the most dangerous missions of the war. They were taught to swim onto a hostile beach, conduct reconnaissance for an amphibious landing or place demolition charges on anti-tank obstacles and then escape – sometimes to be picked up by a submarine – all undetected by the enemy.

Many of these missions are still carried out by the SEALs of today – a beach reconnaissance and hydrographic (underwater) survey, for example, is an important mission for all SEAL Teams. SEALs are also still taught to be expert divers, with a third of the famous Basic Underwater Demolitions/SEAL (BUD/S) School devoted to the topic. In fact, the SEALs owe much of their existence to the pioneers of the Naval Combat Demolitions Units (NCDU) and the Underwater Demolitions Teams (UDTs) who supported both the Normandy landings and the 'island hopping' campaigns in the Pacific.

**"THE EARLIEST DESCENDANTS OF THE MODERN-DAY SEAL WERE NAVY DIVERS TRAINED TO CONDUCT SOME OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MISSIONS OF THE WAR"**

This concept of sailors trained to destroy sea mines, unexploded bombs and enemy beach defences can largely be traced back to one impressive individual, Lieutenant Commander Draper Kauffman. The son of an Admiral, the younger Kauffman joined the US Navy in 1929, attending the prestigious US Naval Academy. He was plagued with poor eyesight and, despite graduating from the Academy and his well-connected family, he was not offered an officer's commission in the US Navy.

Instead, Kauffman's colourful career began in the Merchant Navy, followed by his service as a volunteer ambulance-man in France with the French Army, a year before America even entered World War II. The Germans even briefly

*The surviving men of the Naval Combat Demolitions Units on Omaha Beach, Normandy, on D-Day, 6 June 1944*

*A 1950s era UDT frogman wearing an aqualung astride a US Navy submarine – a common method of transport towards a target*

captured him before he enlisted in the Royal Navy Reserve upon his release and became a bomb disposal officer during the Blitz.

In the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Kauffman returned to the United States and joined the Naval Reserve. He was rushed to Hawaii to defuse a Japanese bomb – the first time such a feat had been successfully attempted – earning him the Navy Cross. As America prepared for war, Kauffman was tasked with establishing a classified bomb disposal school for the Navy, which would be known as the US Naval Bomb and Mine Disposal School.

In 1943, Kauffman established the Naval Combat Demolition Unit (NCDU) whose first training class was made up of graduates of his school and Navy construction engineers known as Seabees. This new unit was based at Fort Pierce in Florida, described by former SEAL Dick Couch as "a mosquito-infested mangrove swamp". Kauffman based much of the syllabus on the Amphibious Scouts and Raiders School that trained Army and Navy reconnaissance teams, including what would later become known as Hell Week.

The surviving candidates from Kauffman's first NCDU course, just over 30 sailors, became the cadre for the first four NCDUs to be established in the Atlantic theatre. Reflecting some of the unique esprit de corps that would come to epitomise the SEALs many years later, these units were given colourful nicknames including 'Kaine's Killers', 'Heidemen's Hurricanes' and 'Jeter's Mosquitoes'.

At the same time a similar unit, the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs), was being established for service in the Pacific theatre. The UDTs differed from the NCDU in their greater emphasis on combat diving – the NCDU sailors typically landed at night in rubber boats to rig explosives of enemy defences rather than swimming into their objective.

The UDTs were formed after the disastrous landings at Tarawa. A previously uncharted submerged reef caused landing craft to run aground, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Marines. The first UDT unit was formed in the wake of these losses. UDT sailors would go on to serve in every major landing operation in the Pacific, ensuring that the tragedy at Tarawa was never repeated. UDTs were typically the 'first in'. On Guam, the UDTs erected a humorous sign to greet the arriving soldiers; "Marines, welcome to Guam Beach, open courtesy of UDT!"

Kauffman himself was posted to the Pacific in early 1944 as commander of UDT Team Five. Not surprisingly, he led from the front, including a daring daylight beach reconnaissance under heavy Japanese fire on the island of Saipan for which he was awarded his second Navy Cross. He went on to command his UDT Team during operations in support of Marine landings on Tinian Island, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

**"ON GUAM, THE UDTS ERECTED A HUMOROUS SIGN TO GREET THE ARRIVING SOLDIERS; "MARINES, WELCOME TO GUAM BEACH, OPEN COURTESY OF UDT!"**

Meanwhile in Europe, the original NCDU teams were preparing for the 'Day of Days', the D-Day landings in occupied France. Renamed Demolitions Gap Assault Teams, the men trained extensively in the demolition of a new type of enemy obstacle that reconnaissance showed had been heavily sown along the Normandy coastline. These obstacles needed to be overcome to allow tanks and other armoured vehicles to land to support of the waves of infantry who would be landing on the beaches.

The so-called 'Belgian Gate' was a 3-tonne anti-tank obstacle that proved particularly difficult to destroy. Tests on captured examples showed that blowing them up simply spread the obstruction. They needed a precise application of explosives to ensure the structure essentially collapsed upon itself. Along with the 'Belgian Gates', the Germans had erected wooden stakes with Teller mines attached and placed thousands more traditional 'hedgehog' anti-

*The UDT use four tonnes of tetrytol to clear a path through a reef in the Pacific theatre, 1944*

***Left, top:** A UDT frogman trains in preparation for the Normandy landings, attaching a demolitions charge to a hedgehog anti-tank obstacle*

***Left, bottom:** The infamous Belgian Gate used by the Germans at Normandy. This example was used for training and has been wired with explosives*

tank obstacles. Each of these obstacles would have to be dealt with by the NCDU teams before tanks could be landed.

On 6 June 1944, some 34 NCDU teams, each comprised of nine NCDU sailors and five US Army combat engineers, landed on Omaha and Utah beaches. Their mission was to destroy the underwater obstacles the Germans had placed to hinder landing craft including the dreaded 'Belgian Gates'. The NCDUs were supposed to arrive in the second wave after the infantry had secured a beachhead but many landed alongside the infantry in the first wave.

On Omaha Beach, famously portrayed in the film *Saving Private Ryan*, the NCDU operators lost more than half of their number as casualties – 31 were killed and 60 badly wounded. Each sailor carried 20 two-pound explosive charges known as a 'Hanensen Pack'. Their job was made more difficult as infantrymen took cover from the deadly German fire behind the 'Belgian Gates' that the Navy men had wired for demolition, preventing their destruction.

On Utah, fate was somewhat kinder and only four sailors were killed by an unlucky German artillery shell. They became the only US Navy unit to be awarded a Unit Commendation while the sailors at Omaha received the Presidential Unit Citation. The NCDUs also served during the invasion of southern France in August 1944, conducting beach reconnaissance and destruction of German fortifications. After this, the unit was disbanded and its sailors reassigned to the UDTs in the Pacific.

Along with the NCDUs and UDTs, a third unit was established which would later feature in the evolution of the SEALs – the Maritime Unit of the secretive Office of Strategic Service (OSS). The Maritime Unit was focused primarily on the covert infiltration of OSS agents into enemy territory and maritime sabotage; swimming into enemy harbours and attaching limpet mines to shipping.

As for the originator, Lieutenant Commander Kauffman, he finally received a commission into the regular Navy in 1946. Today he is recognised as the 'father of the SEALs' and an equally important figure in the history of bomb disposal, eventually completed a 30-year Navy career to retire as a Rear Admiral in 1973. Two Explosive Ordnance Disposal schools now bear his name.

Most of the special warfare units didn't survive the war and were disbanded – only four UDT units made it into the post-war period. These were based at Coronado in California and Little Creek, Virginia, both of which would famously become the future bases of the SEALs. In 1950, another significant milestone to the eventual formation of the SEALs was achieved with the training of the first UDT divers in parachuting.

A UDT detachment was deployed to Korea soon after the outbreak of hostilities in June 1950. A month later that same detachment conducted the first special operation of the war, a mission to destroy a train line and tunnel used for North Korean troop movements. After approaching the tracks, the UDTs were spotted and withdrew under fire after a fierce encounter with enemy troops. One of the UDT operators was wounded, becoming the first US Navy casualty of the war.

The divers brought a unique capability to UN forces and were constantly deployed on operations. A number of UDT personnel were detached for service with the CIA, the start of a relationship with the intelligence agency that would ultimately culminate in the CIA's use of a SEAL Team to kill terrorist leader Osama bin Laden some 60 years later. The UDTs, including veterans of the OSS Maritime Unit, assisted in clandestinely infiltrating CIA operatives on secret missions in the north.

In one of the most famous operations of the war, sailors from UDT Team Three destroyed a major North Korean dock at Hungnam, a port city on the north-east Korean coast, with a reported 20 tonnes of explosives a day before Christmas 1950. A Navy ship used its 5-inch guns to hold off responding Chinese troops until the divers managed to plant the charges and escape by sea.

The result was the largest non-nuclear explosion since World War II. A member of the UDTs remembered, "We didn't leave the

# WELCOME TO HELL WEEK

## SEAL TRAINING GETS NO TOUGHER THAN HELL WEEK: 5.5 DAYS OF EXTREME PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CHALLENGES TESTING CANDIDATES TO THEIR LIMITS

Taking sailors and turning them into SEALs, the gruelling BUD/S (or Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL selection) course is regarded as one of the toughest in the world. Hell Week is a five and a half day test of a SEAL candidate's mental and physical toughness. Many mistakenly believe that Hell Week is the culmination of BUD/S, but it actually takes place in the third of the seven-week Phase One of the course. It's designed to weed out those who will not make the grade and be awarded the SEAL trident.

Statistically, three quarters of SEAL trainees fail Hell Week, deciding to ring the famous brass ship's bell that signifies that they can no longer continue, typically from injury and exhaustion. It was developed by the 'father of the SEALs', the late Rear Admiral Draper Kauffman, who based it on a similar programme conducted by the Amphibious Scouts and Raiders School. Kauffman modified their eight-week course, compressing it into a single week. He christened it Motivation Week before settling on Hell Week as it is known today.

Kauffman also incorporated ideas from British Commando training, famously including the so-called 'Log PT' where sailors were forced to complete their physical training while carrying a telegraph pole over their heads. He also ensured that officers and sailors conducted this training side by side, an egalitarian tradition that continues today.

The original Hell Week routinely saw 60 to 70 per cent of their number 'wash-out' before the survivors began equally intensive training in beach reconnaissance, diving, demolitions, and underwater surveying. Kauffman felt that he needed to ensure his men could face the challenges that operating in enemy held territory would face. Indeed, new recruits were dropped some five miles out to sea and told to swim back.

One of the participants on the original Hell Week, Lieutenant James Cahill, remembered; "During this week, if we were lucky, we could expect approximately five hours of sleep each night. In between this sack time, we would be running, swimming, crawling through swamps, climbing over obstacles, or dodging explosives." Cahill added that during Hell Week the acronym UDT stood for "Unusually Damn Tough." In Cahill's class, only 60 from 165 men made it through.

***Above right:*** *A BUD/S class clearing a mud obstacle course during Hell Week*

***Right:*** *During Hell Week a bell is always within reach, should a student decide he no longer wishes to continue the process*

Red Commies a damn thing but toothpicks and more than likely we got a bunch of them." Another lamented, "Since that day fireworks displays have been ruined for me."

After Korea, the UDTs also took on a new, previously unimagined role. As NASA began to 'reach for the stars' and send astronauts into space, the UDTs were assigned the task of both training those astronauts in maritime survival and were later deployed to recover the astronauts and spacecraft after 'splashdown' in the ocean. During every Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo space mission, Navy UDTs conducted the recovery operation.

Increasingly, the United States recognised that the Cold War would not be fought on a conventional battlefield but rather by proxy using guerrilla and insurgent forces in small-scale 'brush wars' across Africa, South and Central America and Asia. President John F Kennedy became a strong proponent for the concept of special operations units that were trained in unconventional and clandestine warfare.

In 1961 the President announced, "I am directing the Secretary of Defense to expand rapidly and substantially, in co-operation with our allies, the orientation of existing forces for the conduct of non-nuclear war, paramilitary operations, and sub-limited or unconventional wars." The Navy was already assessing the capabilities of the UDTs and Marine Force Recon units to conduct what was called 'naval guerrilla warfare'.

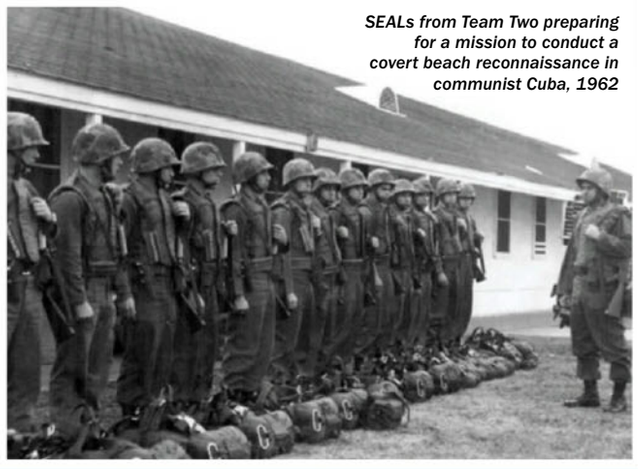
**"PRESIDENT JOHN F KENNEDY BECAME A STRONG PROPONENT FOR THE CONCEPT OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNITS THAT WERE TRAINED IN UNCONVENTIONAL AND CLANDESTINE WARFARE"**

In response to President Kennedy's decree, two new, highly classified, special operations units would be raised and co-located alongside the UDTs at Coronado and Little Creek. These Sea, Air and Land Teams would become known by their acronym: SEALs. The SEALs would concentrate on littoral commando operations – short duration raids and ambushes – along with operations alongside local forces while the UDTs remained dedicated to their demolition and beach reconnaissance role.

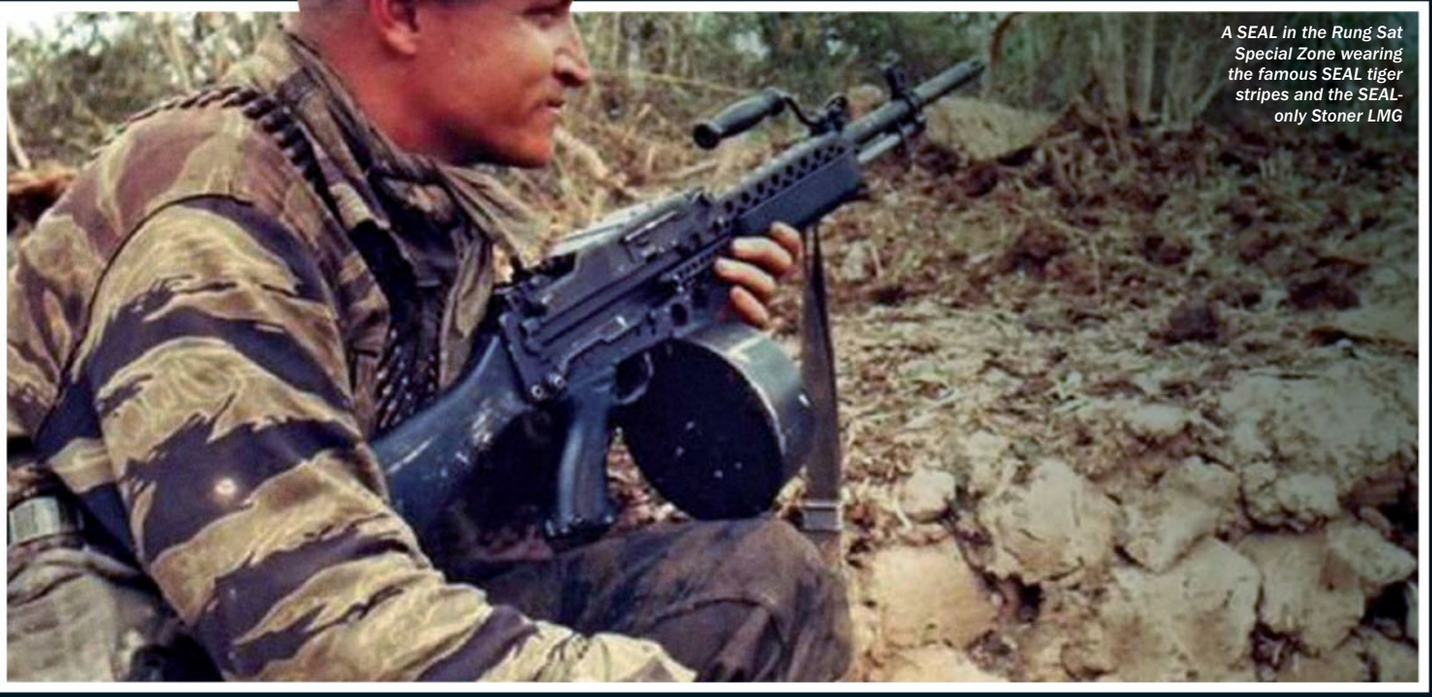
SEAL Team One and SEAL Team Two were officially established in January 1962 with their original members (known as 'plank holders' in SEAL jargon) drawn from the UDTs. One of these first SEALs, Roy Boehm, was briefly the subject of a Navy investigation for buying weapons and equipment for the new units outside of the normal channels. The investigation was quashed under the order of President Kennedy himself.

The new SEAL units were based heavily on the wartime experiences of the earlier NCDUs, UDTs and the OSS Maritime Unit. From the former came reconnaissance and demolitions, while the SEALs developed much of their combat diving expertise from the UDTs. The Maritime Unit provided the skills of covert infiltration by submarine and small boat. These skills were enhanced with further freefall and static line parachute training including High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) techniques.

*A SEAL team emerges from the water during tactical warfare training*



*SEALs from Team Two preparing for a mission to conduct a covert beach reconnaissance in communist Cuba, 1962*



*A SEAL in the Rung Sat Special Zone wearing the famous SEAL tiger stripes and the SEAL-only Stoner LMG*

# SCUBA PIONEERS

## FROM THEIR EARLIEST INCEPTION, THE SEALS HAVE BEEN CALLED UPON TO CARRY OUT SABOTAGE AND INFILTRATION OPERATIONS UNDERWATER

The early UDTs swam using only snorkels and fins but these were soon augmented by some of the first examples of SCUBA gear including the aqualung, an open-circuit diving system. After the war, divers began to use far more advanced equipment such as oxygen rebreathers that eliminated the telltale oxygen bubbles emitted from the aqualung.

In Korea, the UDTs also pioneered the use of dry suits in combat diving operations to combat freezing water temperatures. All UDTs also carried a dive knife although these were typically used as cutting tools rather than offensively. When carrying weapons, guns were sealed in plastic against the water.

*SEAL Delivery Vehicles (SDV) are used to carry Navy SEALs to enemy targets undetected*

**"AFTER THE WAR, THE DIVERS BEGAN TO USE FAR MORE ADVANCED EQUIPMENT"**

*A Navy SEAL, or 'Frogman' in full diving gear*

*Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard, The Art Agency*

Prospective SEALs would have to complete the 18-week UDT course before attempting a six-week SEAL Basic Indoctrination course that taught small unit tactics and land warfare. Although many believe the SEALs first missions were in Vietnam, in fact a mixed team of SEALs and UDTs deployed to Cuba where they conducted beach reconnaissance missions in advance of a proposed American invasion in the wake of the Bay of Pigs debacle.

This first SEAL operational mission almost ended in failure after the SEALs and their recovery submarine failed to link up. The SEALs and UDTs decided to follow their back-up plan and swim for Key West but thankfully, just as they set off, the submarine surfaced and they were saved from a long swim. The fledgling SEALs also successfully infiltrated and extracted a CIA agent onto the island to take photographs of Soviet missiles.

The first SEALs to deploy to Vietnam were as small teams of advisors to the South Vietnamese Navy and Marines. The SEALs also struck up their old friendship with the CIA that dated back to OSS days. Soon individual SEALs were being detached to the Agency to conduct covert operations including working with the controversial Phung Huong or Phoenix Program. Phoenix was designed to capture or eliminate key Viet Cong personnel including tax collectors and quartermasters, sometimes through covert assassination.

By 1965, 12 to 16-man SEAL platoons from SEAL Teams One and Two deployed to South Vietnam to begin six-month tours of duty. Their missions would include reconnaissance, ambushing and intelligence gathering under Operation Game Warden, a wider Navy mission to interdict Viet Cong troop movements and supply lines. SEALs would often infiltrate into a Viet Cong base area to call in Navy Seawolf helicopter gunships to destroy supply caches. Other SEALs were deployed under Operation Market Time to intercept boats smuggling Viet Cong supplies.

The SEALs deployed with their own boats from the Mobile Support Teams (MSTs). These teams were responsible for infiltrating and extracting the SEALs from a target area by a range of specialist SEAL boats including the barge-like Heavy SEAL Support Craft that bristled with machine guns and grenade launchers. The SEALs also began perfecting helicopter-borne operations including the use of the 'STABO rig'

**"THEY WERE EQUALLY FEARED AND RESPECTED BY THEIR PRIMARILY VIET CONG GUERRILLA OPPONENTS. THEY ALSO INFLICTED AN IMPACT FAR BEYOND THEIR SIZE, RECORDING 600 CONFIRMED ENEMY DEATHS AND AS MANY AS 300 UNCONFIRMED"**

that enabled up to four SEALs to be extracted by a helicopter winch.

The Navy men also began a tradition of unconventional weapons and equipment. Instead of issue fatigues, they wore the distinctive 'tiger stripe' camouflage pattern and often favoured denim jeans and sneakers. Their weapons soon included the distinctive Stoner light machine gun, a suppressed pistol known as the 'Hush Puppy' (named after its original role of eradicating guard dogs) and experimental grenade launchers and fully-automatic shotguns.

In the Mekong Delta, the Vietnamese christened the SEALs 'the men with green faces' on account of the camouflage face cream the SEALs used to break up the outline and shine of their faces. They were equally feared and respected by their primarily Viet Cong guerrilla opponents. They also inflicted an impact far beyond their numbers, recording 600 confirmed enemy deaths and as many as 300 unconfirmed, impressive considering there were only as many as five or six SEAL platoons operating in South Vietnam at any one time.

The SEALs also fought with another clandestine organisation, the innocuously named Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group or MACV SOG. They planned and executed covert reconnaissance missions deep into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia where the guerrillas maintained safe havens. SEALs were also attached to a unique joint American and South Vietnamese commando unit sponsored by the CIA called the Provincial Reconnaissance Units or PRUs.

SEALs served in Vietnam until 1971 when the last SEAL platoon departed although individual SEAL advisers remained with the PRUs until early 1973. During seven years of combat operations in South East Asia, the SEAL Teams lost 46 operators killed in action. Platoons routinely suffered a quarter of their number wounded. Teams One and Two were awarded a record number of decorations including two Navy Crosses, 42 Silver Stars, 402 Bronze Stars, three Presidential Unit Citations, and three Medals of Honor.

In the aftermath of Vietnam, the SEALs were reduced in numbers but, by the turn of the century and into the War on Terror, eventually expanded to their current size of ten SEAL Teams, along with a classified eleventh; the famous SEAL Team Six or Naval Special Warfare Development Group. The SEALs' compatriots in the UDTs became the Swimmer Delivery and Special Boat Teams in 1984, specialising in both submersibles and small boats. All, undoubtedly, owe their existence to Kauffman and his Naval Combat Demolition Unit.

## FURTHER READING

- **AMERICA'S FIRST FROGMAN: THE DRAPER KAUFFMAN STORY** BY ELIZABETH KAUFFMAN BUSH
- **SEAL! FROM VIETNAM'S PHOENIX PROGRAM TO CENTRAL AMERICA'S DRUG WARS** BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER MIKE WALSH AND GREG WALKER
- **THE SHERIFF OF RAMADI** BY DICK COUCH
- **BRAVE MEN – DARK WATERS** BY ORR KELLY

# POW RESCUE 1970

### NAVY SEALS FROM TEAM ONE RESCUED SOUTH VIETNAMESE PRISONERS FROM VIET CONG PRISON CAGES ON THE CUA LON RIVER

Rescue missions to recover prisoners of war are rare. Conducting such a mission relies upon a perfect storm of accurate intelligence, surgical firepower and a strong dose of luck. Whiskey Platoon of SEAL Team One managed such a feat in November 1970, just hours after the far more famous but far less successful Son Tây rescue attempt in North Vietnam.

The SEAL mission became one of the only successful rescues of Allied personnel since the famous Cabanatuan raid in 1945 in which US Army Rangers rescued more than 500 prisoners from certain execution by their Japanese captors. The SEALs of Detachment Golf of Whiskey Platoon had received intelligence from a friendly fisherman that was later confirmed by a local village chief about a number of South Vietnamese soldiers being held by the Viet Cong.

The Team's commander decided on a covert approach to the target area. His SEALs, accompanied by locally recruited Kit Carson scouts and a Vietnamese interpreter, would infiltrate into the general area by patrol boat before transferring to sampans that would offer a virtually silent approach to the prison camp. A SEAL quick reaction force in a helicopter stood by up-river ready to pounce should the mission go wrong.

The raiders included seven SEALs armed with a mix of Stoner and customised M60 light machine guns, M16 assault rifles mounting M203 grenade launchers and shortened CAR-15 carbines. The Kit Carson scouts carried AK-47s and would lead the team into the prison – in the darkness the distinctive shape of the AK might give them an edge as the Viet Cong decided if the new arrivals were friend or foe.

The SEALs headed out after dark and after some initial confusion about the location of the camp, they managed to swap over to the sampans. As they silently approached, a man's cough alerted them to an unseen sentry in a crude hut on the bank. The SEALs quickly captured the Viet Cong who soon began to spill the beans on the location of both other sentries and the prisoners. Amending their plan based on this latest intelligence, the SEALs left their sampans and crept into the camp, illuminated only by a single cooking fire.

Disaster struck when a flare gun carried by the SEAL commander for signalling the patrol boats, fell from his grasp, clattering to the ground and raising the alarm. Several of the sentries opened fire in surprise, sending the POWs diving for the ground in their bamboo prison cages. The SEALs delivered a massive amount of return fire that saw the surviving Viet Cong choose discretion over valour, escaping into the surrounding jungle.

The prison camp was quickly secured and the SEALs split into two elements – one manning a defensive perimeter should unexpected Viet Cong reinforcements arrive while the others began to cut the locks from the POWs' cages. The SEALs had rescued 19 South Vietnamese POWs, some of which had been held for a number of years.

The SEALs fired their flare gun and the patrol boats headed in to pick them up. Overhead Seawolf UH-1B gunships arrived to escort the patrol boats back to base after one of the only successful POW rescues of the Vietnam War.

The official Navy after action report notes: "In an area 15 kilometres east-southeast of New Nam Can, the SEALs and PFs freed 19 South Vietnamese POWs after carrying on a running fire fight with 18 VC guards. The aggressiveness of the SEALs and PFs was clearly exhibited in this team operation. Two VC were also captured along with numerous documents in the raid. Worthy of note is the fact that this was the first in-country operation for Whiskey Platoon and its supporting unit, MST Det Charlie."

## "CONDUCTING SUCH A MISSION RELIES UPON A PERFECT STORM OF ACCURATE INTELLIGENCE, SURGICAL FIREPOWER AND A STRONG DOSE OF LUCK"

***Above:** SEAL Team One pose with their Stoner and M60 machine guns (and cigar!) prior to a mission*

***Above:** Rescued POWs are seated in the foreground while the SEALs and Kit Carson scouts stand in the background*

*Images: Alamy, Getty, Thinkstock, Navy SEAL Museum, Textures.com, US Navy*

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# HMS WARRIOR

## The world's first iron-hulled, armour-plated warship is a marvel of engineering that symbolises Victorian ingenuity and a forgotten naval arms race

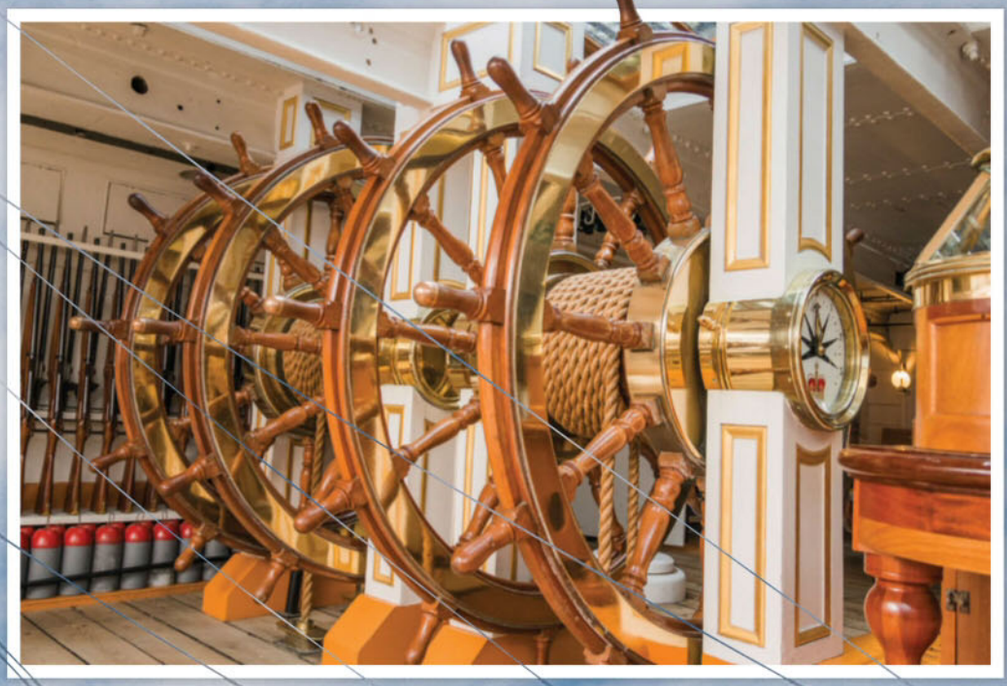
WORDS TOM GARNER
WITH THANKS TO
FIONA POUSTIE
& RICHARD MAY

*HMS Warrior is the first and only surviving example of the 'Black Battlefleet', the Royal Navy's 45 iron-hulled ships that were built between 1861-77*

Throughout the 19th century Britain was the foremost naval power in the world. Since the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the Royal Navy achieved a supremacy that it would not lose for 150 years, but that did not mean it was without serious rivals. Although the British had defeated Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815, Bonapartism survived as a political force in France. In 1852 Napoleon's nephew became Emperor Napoleon III and started to reassert French military influence. This included an aggressive shipbuilding programme, which culminated in the launch of 'La Gloire' in 1859, the first ironclad (but wooden hulled) warship.

Determined to counter this threat, the British built an even bigger ship that was superior in every respect. The result was HMS Warrior, which was launched in 1860 and was the largest and fastest warship in the world. It was 60 per cent bigger than La Gloire, heavily armoured, armed to the teeth with 40 guns and manned by 705 crewmembers. Under full steam and sails, Warrior once achieved a top speed of 17.5 knots (32 kilometres per hour) and was designed to be capable of an average of 15 knots (28 kilometres per hour).

To begin with there was no ship to match Warrior, which ironically resulted in it never seeing action – serving instead as an ironclad deterrent. Warrior saw service for over 20 years, mainly serving in the English Channel Squadron but within 5-7 years it became obsolete as its example kick-started the production of even bigger warships. Decommissioned in 1883, Warrior spent many years forgotten as a refuelling depot but it was restored between 1979-85 to its former glory.



***Above:*** *Warrior had three sets of wheels on different decks. These wheels are on the gun deck and are known as 'battle wheels' as they were for use in action. It took eight men to operate them*

## "TO BEGIN WITH THERE WAS NO SHIP TO MATCH WARRIOR, WHICH IRONICALLY RESULTED IN IT NEVER SEEING ACTION – SERVING INSTEAD AS AN IRONCLAD DETERRENT"

### HMS WARRIOR

MANUFACTURER: THAMES IRONWORKS & SHIPBUILDING COMPANY
COMMISSIONED: 1861
LENGTH: 128 M (418 FT)
BEAM: 17.8 M (58 FT)
DRAFT: 8.2 M (26 FT)
DISPLACEMENT: 9,210 TONNES
SPEED: 24 KM/H (13 KNOTS) UNDER SAIL, 28KM/H (15 KNOTS) UNDER STEAM
POWERPLANT: 1 X JOHN PENN & SONS TWO-CYLINDER TRUNK STEAM ENGINE
ARMAMENT: 40 GUNS AND CANNON WITH ADDITIONAL SMALL ARMS
CREW: 705

# ARMAMENT

Warrior has one deck of guns, which includes 26 68-pounder cannon and ten rifled breech-loading guns. The varied ammunition consisted of smooth cannonballs, explosive shells, canister shots and even shells that could fire hot metal liquid. They were the largest and most modern guns of the period and could fire a broadside weight of over 1,360 kilograms. Warrior additionally had four 40-pounder guns on the upper deck and a variety of small arms including 350 Enfield rifles, 70 Colt Navy revolvers, cutlasses, axes and pikes.

*Some of Warrior's Colt Navy revolvers are stored in an ornate weapons holder called a 'crocus'*


***Left:** Warrior boasted two guns mounted on the upper deck. Mounted on sliding trucks, they allowed Warrior to engage an enemy in a chase*

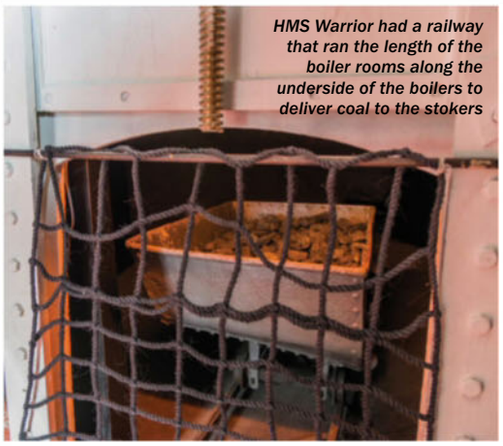
*Warrior's single gun deck was a radical idea in a naval age of multiple decks, but its guns and cannon were the most powerful of their day*

*When all ten boilers were lit, temperatures could reach 50 degrees Celsius in the boiler rooms. Consequently, engineers, stokers and trimmers received a larger wage than seamen*

**"THE ENGINE TURNED THE PROPELLER SHAFT, WHICH EXTENDED OVER 100 FEET TO THE STERN WHERE THE PROPELLER BLADE WAS FITTED"**

## ENGINE, BOILERS AND... RAILWAY

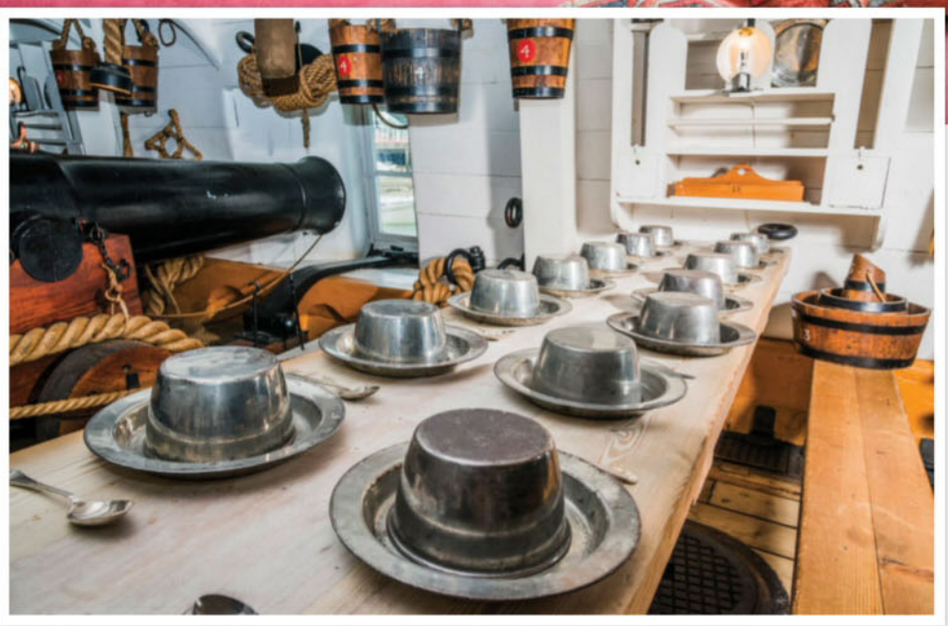
There are ten boilers on board that are housed in two rooms, with each being capable of containing 17 tonnes of water. 850 tonnes of coal were used to heat them, which was housed in a bunker. Trimmers would shovel coal onto a railway system that ran between the bunker and boiler rooms and then pushed along trolleys to the relevant boiler. The steam produced powered the nearby twin-cylinder engine. The boiler and engine rooms were located in the middle of the ship so their combined weight did not affect the hull's trim. The engine turned the propeller shaft, which extended over 30.5 metres to the stern where the propeller blade was fitted.



*HMS Warrior had a railway that ran the length of the boiler rooms along the underside of the boilers to deliver coal to the stokers*

*The ship's horizontal cylinder engine was economical with space and very efficient. The large cranks revolved at 56 rpm: approximately one revolution per second*

*Visitors to the captain's cabin would be hospitably received and guests included the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, members of the Royal Family and the kings of Greece and Egypt*



***Right:** 650 men lived in close proximity to one another on the gun deck and 18 men would share a mess table for meals*

# QUARTERS

The quality of accommodation aboard Warrior depended on rank. Out of a crew of 705, 650 lived on the gun deck, with 18 men per mess table. These men slept in hammocks and lived in close to the guns. There was more privacy for officers who slept in individual cabins with bunks. The chief engineer, captain of Marines and four paymasters also had cabins.

Warrior's pre-eminence in the Royal Navy gave its captain an exalted status and he was known as 'Second only unto God'. Consequently, his cabin was large enough to entertain heads of state and government for diplomatic occasions with the best plate, food and furniture available. Legend has it that the only exalted dignitary who didn't visit Warrior was Queen Victoria herself.

## NAVAL INNOVATIONS

Warrior was a revolutionary ship in terms of structure and crew welfare. It is armoured with 11.5 centimetres of wrought iron, backed by 46 centimetres of teak and then 2.5 centimetres of the ship's actual iron hull.

This metal cocoon encompassed some enlightened naval practices. The crew were volunteers who were guaranteed regular pay, pensions and vocational courses. They had easy access to fresh water from condensers, tightly controlled rum rations and an improved diet. The importance of personal hygiene was also recognised, so Warrior features a complex of bathrooms and laundry facilities. It was compulsory to bathe regularly and there were steam-injected hand-cranked washing machines and an innovative drying room, which was coal-fired.

***Above:** Engineers and stokers wore white uniforms to be visible while shovelling coal in dark conditions. Their clothes were regularly cleaned in these manual washing machines*

**HMS Warrior is berthed in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard complex and is open to the public. For more details visit www.hmswarrior.org**

HMS WARRIOR 1860

*A cross section of Warrior's bulkhead armour. From left to right is the iron hull, teak and armour plating*

Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# STANLEY HOLLIS

6 June, 1944. Of the thousands of men to hit the Normandy beachheads on D-Day, just one would receive Britain's highest military honour…

WORDS **NICK SOLDINGER**

The average age of the Allied soldiers who hit the beaches of Normandy on D-Day was around 20. Of the 61,000 British troops who landed though, just one would receive the Victoria Cross for gallantry – even though he'd be nominated twice for the medal that fateful day.

At 31, Company Sergeant Major (CSM) Stanley Hollis of the Green Howards was one of the most experienced soldiers in the British army. He'd first fought in France in 1940, as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that had been booted off the continent at Dunkirk. He'd then taken the fight back to the Nazis, distinguishing himself first in North Africa at the Battle of El Alamein, as a member of the legendary 8th Army's Desert Rats, before being wounded during the invasion of Sicily in 1943. By 6 June 1944, Hollis had already been fighting on the front line for four years. D-Day, however, one of the most intense 24 hours in military history, was to turn this son of a chip shop owner into a man whom history would rightly honour.

Shortly before dawn on 6 June, Hollis found himself and his comrades being loaded into landing craft just off the coast of France. As Hollis prepared his unit under cover of darkness, he was approached by his Commanding officer and told to distribute condoms to each of his men. Hollis's legendary hissed reply was, 'Sir, are we going to fight the enemy, or f*** them?' The joke broke the silence and the tension.

It was typical Hollis. Crudely funny, but ultimately designed to dispel the fear among the young men he'd soon be leading into mortal combat. Most of his charges had never seen battle before. Hollis, though scared, had stared down the demon many times before. He'd seen first hand what bullets and shrapnel could do, having lost many comrades – some of whom he'd grown up with. He'd also seen what it could do to the enemy. Some reports suggest that by the time his war was over he'd killed around 100 men.

Not that Hollis was some gung-ho psycho who loved a tear-up. This father of two was a humble man whose children would reveal, many years later, how he was tormented by these killings. As he saw it, his actions had left blood on his hands. Hollis's heroism, which would later inspire many comic-book re-tellings, came from a far deeper, human desire to protect those around him. Many of those he served with were his neighbours and the sons of his neighbours from back home in Middlesbrough, north-eastern England – it was his job, Hollis felt, to get these men home.

Hollis was CSM of the Green Howards' D Company, and when their landing craft approached Gold Beach around 7.30am, they found it prickling with German defences. D-Day had finally begun, and the battle for Europe's future with it.

'After we'd been in the landing craft about half an hour,' Hollis later recalled, 'everything in the world opened up from behind us. There were 25-pounders firing from platforms, floating platforms firing thousands of rockets in one salvo, cruisers, destroyers, battleships, everything opened up on the shore. The beach area was saturated which must have done a wonderful job of dealing with the thousands of mines all over the area.'

As it closed in on the Normandy coastline the landing craft's doors opened and Hollis and his men were ordered ashore. They soon found themselves wading waist-deep in water – a precarious business when laden down with around two extra stone of kit and ammunition. As Hollis went into the water he watched as another veteran and friend of his, Sergeant Hill, disappeared under the water, losing his footing to a shell hole. He never resurfaced and moments later a landing craft went over the top of him, its propeller blades quickly turning the sea water red with Hill's blood.

Hollis's objective was to clear German positions on the higher ground just beyond the beachhead, near La Riviere, and create a passageway through which waves of British reinforcements could be funnelled. When he reached the shore, Hollis led his men 100 yards across the beach to the high-water mark. Shellfire shook the ground, explosions threw up geysers of sand high into the sky and the air buzzed with bullets. Following combat engineers with metal detectors through the minefield beyond the beach, Hollis's men soon found themselves in bocage country. Normandy's winding lanes lined with thick, two-metre-high hedgerows that a tank would struggle to get through, and which would entangle Allied and German infantry in a deadly game of cat and mouse for the next five weeks.

Almost immediately Hollis's unit was to discover just how deadly the bocage could be, as machine-gun fire suddenly raked through their ranks. Taking cover, Hollis and his

**“Stan Hollis was a remarkable, resolute fighter. He was one of those people who, through the force of his own personality, could change the course of a battle”**

Brigadier John Powell, the Green Howards’ last commander

*Hollis was 188cm (6ft 2in) tall and was known for his fiery temper, but he acted out of altruism*

*Image: Getty | Colourisation: Marina Amaral§*

commanding officer, Major Lofthouse, crawled to the top of a hill to locate the source of the gunfire. It was a cleverly camouflaged pillbox just ahead of them, and Hollis watched in horror as it now took more of his comrades' lives. Without warning, Hollis suddenly broke cover and charged the German position. "I got my Sten gun and I rushed at it," he later recalled. "Spraying it hosepipe fashion. They fired back at me but they missed. I got on top of it and I threw a grenade through the slit, then I went around the back and went inside. There were two dead and quite a lot of prisoners quite willing to forget all about the war."

Single-handedly, Hollis had not just taken out a deadly German defensive position, but captured 18 enemy combatants in the process. This incredible act of individual heroism was to earn him his first nomination for a Victoria Cross that day.

By midday, the Green Howards had taken most of their immediate objectives but despite Hollis's best efforts, casualties had been high. The officer in charge of 16th Platoon had been killed, so Hollis was ordered to assume command, and was immediately tasked with clearing the village of Crépon to allow the 6th Green Howards to pass through and reach their main objectives five miles further south.

Coming across a lone farmhouse, Hollis's platoon began to search it. Finding nothing inside except for a terrified ten-year-old boy, Hollis went back outside the building to search the farmyard. Using a stone wall for cover he poked his head around a corner to glance into an orchard only to hear a loud crack and see a lump of masonry fly out in front of him, narrowly missing his head. A German bullet had hit the wall a few centimetres from his face.

> **"He was such a brave man. He had a very quick mind, and could sum up situations in a flash. He never, ever, panicked, and he knew exactly the right thing to do in action"**
>
> Jack Smith, who served with Hollis in the Green Howards

Hollis crouched, and carefully glimpsed around the corner again to see where the gunfire had come from. About 150 yards across the orchard he spotted movement through a gap in the high hedgerow. He'd stumbled upon a hidden enemy field gun. He raced back to Major Lofthouse, who now gave Hollis permission to return to the position and take it out.

Grabbing a Projector, Infantry, Anti Tank launcher (PIAT), Hollis ordered two Bren gunners to accompany him. The three men returned to the farmhouse and using a rhubarb patch for cover crawled toward the German position. When they'd got as close as they dared, Stan loaded the PIAT, took careful aim, and fired. The notoriously inaccurate weapon missed its target, however, and the Germans now turned the artillery gun on Hollis and his men. As a shell screamed over their heads, taking off the roof of the farmhouse behind, Hollis ordering an immediate withdrawal. Escaping amid a blizzard of enemy fire he returned to Major Lofthouse to report the action, only to realise that the two Bren gunners he'd taken with him hadn't escaped. Both, in fact, had been wounded and were now pinned down by enemy fire fighting for their lives. "I got them into all this," he told Lofthouse grabbing a Bren gun, "so it's my job to get them out."

Hollis now doubled back into the farmhouse, and displaying the same kind of staggering courage he'd shown earlier in the day, he now charged the German position. Firing from the hip, he shouted at his two men to pull back fast. He continued firing as bullets flew all about him until his two men had withdrawn to safety. Only then did he escape himself.

Hollis still wasn't done, however, and a third engagement later that day saw him again single-handedly attack an enemy position when his men again got pinned down in the bocage. Having come under fire from two Germans he'd thrown a grenade at them – which in the confusion of battle he'd failed to pull the pin from – and had then rushed them, killing both with his Sten gun.

*In November 2015 a statue celebrating Stanley Hollis's heroics on D-Day was finally unveiled in his home town of Middlesbrough*

*Over 156,000 British American, Canadian and French troops landed on D-Day. Hollis was one of 61,000 from the UK*


**"The last time I saw him he was coming down this hill where there was this dead German. He said, 'Don't touch him Charlie, he's booby-trapped'. He saved my life"**

D-Day veteran Charlie Hill, who was 19 at the time

For this and the earlier action at the farmhouse, Hollis was to receive his second nomination for a Victoria Cross – although protocol only allows recipients to be awarded a single medal in a single day of fighting. The award was announced in the *London Gazette* on 17 August 1944. The citation read, "Wherever the fighting was heaviest throughout the day, Hollis displayed daring and gallantry… He alone prevented the enemy from holding up the advance of the Green Howards at critical stages… By his own bravery, he saved the lives of many of his men."

Hollis's Division, the 50th Northumbrian, had overcome its initial obstacles by mid morning on D-Day, and by nightfall had pushed almost to the outskirts of Bayeux. It was closer to its prescribed objectives than any other Allied formation on that historic day. Hollis fought on with them, right throughout the Normandy Campaign, until he was eventually invalided out the war in September after receiving a leg wound. It was his sixth injury of the war, including a broken cheekbone he'd suffered while briefly a prisoner of the Germans in North Africa. He was sent home, his fighting days were finally over.

When asked years later what had motivated him to such selfless acts of courage, Hollis replied, "These fellas were my mates. I'd lived with them. Apart from being in the army, I'd lived with them in Civvy Street before. Everybody knew everybody else. And the things that I did… well, if I hadn't done them, somebody else would have had to."

***Left:** The Allied invasion of Normandy, which Hollis took part in, was the biggest amphibious assault in the history of warfare*

# Blood, oil & Angola

Tremendous oil wealth allowed this state to rebuild after 40 years of brutal civil war. But can its corrupt politicians stave off looming disaster?

WORDS **MIGUEL MIRANDA**

The country ruled by José Eduardo dos Santos is a postcard for everything wrong with Africa today. What passes for the local economy is irrelevant, since the state's coffers are enriched – to the tune of a $52 billion national budget in 2015 – by Sonangol, the national oil company.

Outside the dusty seaside capital, Luanda, with its real estate boom and exorbitant living costs, the rest of the nation languishes. Land mines from the long civil war era make the southern plains and savannahs hazardous for travellers, who won't be granted visas anyway. The rusting hulks of destroyed tanks serve as mementoes to a recent if bygone dark age.

With record-breaking GDP levels, and per capita income soaring above its penurious neighbours, Angola is a nouvea riche state whose future looks to continue in this way. Oil companies are comfortable with Angola's vibrant mix of natural wealth, chaos, and corruption. It's a Chinese El Dorado to boot, having proven a consistent oil supplier to the People's Republic for the better part of a decade. Despite this, Angola is miserably poor.

There's neither enough agricultural development, nor well-heeled consumers, to suggest a post-oil bubble economy is taking shape. Infant mortality is alarming in a country where the population bulge is composed of children below the age of five.

At the very least, Angola can lay claim to not being as corrupt as its peers in the continent. Equally, oil-rich Nigeria maintains its place at rock bottom according to Transparency International. Angola, on the other hand, manages to appear less horrid with its own ranking in the top 20 most corrupt.

An embarrassment of oil that created what one journalist described as "the most disgusting rich-poor gap imaginable"; an overstaying nepotistic autocrat for a head of state (36 years and counting); a heritage of civil war; human misery and suffering on a vast scale. Angola ticks all these boxes.

It can be argued that Angola's predicament is not its fault. The spectre of colonialism, and 400 years under the Portuguese, warped its national consciousness. Angola was also a vast stage for one of the Cold War's more complicated sideshows, where Soviets and Cubans defied a brazen South Africa and its backers in Washington, DC.

But it was the very same Angolan patriots dreaming of their country's independence during the 1950s who laid the foundation for their country's woes.

The former leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, accomplished enormous feats when it came to destroying his country. With UNITA little more than a proxy for the CIA, Pretoria, Tel Aviv, and other assorted allies during the 1980s, the group had little to offer national reconciliation during the 1990s.

Unwilling to share power with his rivals from the ruling People's Union for the Liberation of

"ANGOLA IS A NOUVEA RICHE STATE WHOSE FUTURE LOOKS TO CONTINUE IN THIS WAY. OIL COMPANIES ARE COMFORTABLE WITH ANGOLA'S VIBRANT MIX OF NATURAL WEALTH, CHAOS, AND CORRUPTION"

## A TARNISHED AFRICAN JEWEL

**1576**
The Portuguese explorer, Paulo Dias de Novais, founds the settlement St Paul of Luanda. In ten years it becomes the precarious fortress outpost for Dutch commerce and slaving.

**1915**
After 30 years of harsh colonial rule by Germany, the Great War engulfing Europe leads to a British-led South African force invading and occupying Namibia, which is annexed as South-West Africa.

**1955**
Blocks of offshore oil are discovered beyond Luanda's beaches. The following year the Cabinda Protectorate is brought under Angola's jurisdiction and more offshore deposits are found in its waters.


*The menacing Mi-24 Hind gunship proved itself in Angola as a transport, a bomber, and a terror weapon*

Angola (MPLA), Savimbi returned to the bush. It wasn't until he was ambushed and gunned down by government soldiers in 2002 that Angola truly moved on from its long conflict. This is when the foreign oil workers flooded in and a global commodities boom turned President Santos' regime into a darling trade partner.

Yet in an obscure territory known as Cabinda, an exclave squeezed between Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the faint tremors of impending war are throbbing. Like a distant colony of inordinate importance, Cabinda is ruled by Angola like a prized estate. But there are armed rebels in Cabinda. Is it a time bomb waiting to explode?

## Silver and slaves

The lower half of Africa attained new significance for the greater world when Portuguese explorers began exploring its coast in the late 15th century. Their modified ocean-going caravels navigated treacherous waters, risking disaster, but initial surveys and landings made it plain to them opportunity beckoned. It was, after all, an age of bold adventure. The Kingdom of Portugal, constrained as it was by geography, was putting its maritime tradition to good use.

This was fortuitous, because the Iberian Peninsula was gripped by the Reconquista's final wars. The armies of unified Castile and Aragon were poised for victory against the stubborn Moors in Granada and when Spain emerged triumphant in 1492 its co-equal sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella were prepared to bankroll voyages to build an overseas empire.

The depths of Africa, however, were terra incognita. It was apparent that heathen nations inhabited the continent, but what enterprise – or the possibility of such – could lure the cutting edge Portuguese to beat the nascent Spanish and claim a toehold in the continent?

It wasn't slaves since the demand for cheap labour didn't exist yet. Several decades after the explorer Diogo Cão roved the coasts of East Africa a hardy band of Portuguese mariners and entrepreneurs established Saint Paul of Luanda, a de facto capital and forward base. The purpose of this mission was to ascertain where silver mines could be found in the interior by following the Cuanza River. Venturing beyond its walls was fraught with risk because surrounding them were fiercely independent kingdoms, like Matamba and Ndongo, whose rulers – the fearsome Ngola kings – had no tolerance for interlopers.

There were no silver hoards to be claimed at the far reaches of the Cuanza. Soon enough a new impetus drove the Portuguese away. The project to claim the boundless territory of Brazil was stricken by plague and marauding Indians. Determined to firmly establish their grip on the New World and its riches, Portuguese crews were contracted as slavers. This was how the Trans-Atlantic trade was born.

**"ANGOLAN RESISTANCE TO PORTUGUESE RULE WAS NEVER A UNITED FRONT AND THREE FACTIONS VIED TO CONTROL LUANDA"**

It's easy to portray the Atlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity perpetrated by cruel Europeans. Yet the disturbing truth is slavery and kidnapping were timeworn traditions in Africa long before its uneasy contact with Western civilisation. Even the legendary Angolan heroine, Queen Nzinga – who demanded she be treated an equal by Portugal's envoys – profited from slave trafficking while defying the Europeans.

What the Portuguese – and soon the Spanish, Dutch, French, and British – accomplished was to innovate the business model. They introduced merchandise and guns as goods for barter, and established a brutally efficient maritime freight network to transport the warm bodies.

The colony of Angola – the name borrowed from the title used by local rulers – was established in the 19th century. When the scramble for Africa was launched from Berlin in 1884, the Portuguese were determined to carve up the lush Kongo and landed their army outside Luanda.

But years of campaigning, and a permanent claim by the Belgian crown on Africa's heartland, left them with a clearly defined northern border instead, with the exception of the so-called Cabinda Protectorate.

To the south and east Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany had taken the Skeleton Coast and the Kalahari Desert. Lisbon and Berlin settled on another border, and the territory that emerged hasn't changed since.

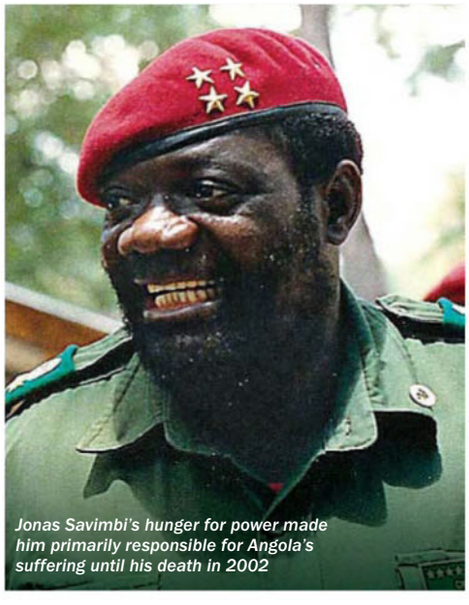
The first stirring of independence from the Portuguese yoke began in earnest during the 1950s. It soon became apparent for Angola's earnest patriots that shaking off Lisbon's dominance was best settled by force.

## The Castro Brothers

Given how Angolan nationalism bloomed in the 1950s, it isn't surprising that organisations like the MPLA and its rival the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), whose leadership had very close ties with Belgian Congo, swung left.

But an early uprising in northern Angola was quashed by the Portuguese, who fielded a ruthless colonial army bent on upholding

*After rejecting a forced conscription drive in his village, a young man is beaten by MPLA members*



*Jonas Savimbi's hunger for power made him primarily responsible for Angola's suffering until his death in 2002*

**1961**
Multiple uprisings by left-leaning nationalist groups erupt in northern and central Angola. The MPLA's activities near Luanda compel the deployment of 50,000 Portuguese soldiers to suppress the rebel threat.

**1964**
Disenchanted by the ethnic politics of the FNLA, Jonas Savimbi and Antonio da Costa Fernandes split from the rebel group to form UNITA, whose supporters are primarily from southern and central Angola.

**1974**
A coup in Lisbon by restive veteran army officers on 25 April triggers the Carnation Revolution. The generally peaceful civilian uprising topples Portugal's fascist Second Republic led by Marcelo Caetano.

**1975**
On 11 November, Angola officially gains its independence from Portugal but another civil war begins as the FNLA and UNITA are determined to overthrow the MPLA in the capital Luanda.

**1976**
The sudden Cuban intervention to help the MPLA results in a stunning victory at Quifangondo. Up to 15,000 Cuban soldiers arrive in Angola until 1979 with the blessing of Luanda and Moscow.

*Rusting armoured vehicles are solemn reminders of Angola's strife*

national prestige. Unwilling to turn its back on its colonial possessions like the British and the French, grinding civil wars were Portugal's antidote for the rebellions in Angola and its other colony in the east, Mozambique.

Try as it might, by 1974 the jig was up. The Carnation Revolution had unseated Portugal's ruling dictatorship and negotiations began in earnest for Angola's independence on 11 November the following year.

This is where matters turned awry. Angolan resistance to Portuguese rule was never a united front and three factions vied to control Luanda. There was the FNLA who were led by the aloof Holden Roberto – a rumoured salaried stooge of the CIA – who were loathed by the Marxists of the MPLA led by António Agostinho Neto. They deemed Roberto's background and cohorts as ethnic Congolese. This sentiment was shared by Jonas Savimbi and his army from the south. Although Savimbi, who studied medicine in Portugal and received paramilitary training in China, was an ardent nationalist, he was willing to work with whoever could strengthen UNITA against its rivals.

These feuds boiled over when independence finally arrived. The armed wing of the MPLA – known as FAPLA – was entrenched in Luanda. Savimbi's forces struck from the south and barely made it to the capital's outskirts. It was the FNLA who then attacked from camps in Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where truck convoys manned by foreign mercenaries and Congolese 'advisers' sped across the border and raced to Luanda.

FAPLA had neither the firepower nor a viable air force to slow the FNLA's advance. This is when the MPLA's leader and Angola's first President Neto struck a bargain with Havana, whose ideological bent had made it a trusted partner for beleaguered African states. After long conferences with President Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl, who led the armed forces, it was decided to deploy thousands of Cubans in Angola's aid with utmost haste. Dubbed Operation Carlotta, the effort launched the continuous deployment of Cuban soldiers and advisers to Angola in the next 15 years.

The tide was turned outside an insignificant village called Quifangondo. Its puny FAPLA garrison was suddenly bolstered with Cuban special forces and motorised infantry. These units had a battery of BM-21 Grad rockets that, when launched en masse, panicked the oncoming FNLA, whose fighters retreated back to Zaire. It's still speculated that, despite generous financial and material aid from the CIA, the FNLA never proved itself in combat thanks to the incompetence of its leadership. In Quifangondo, at least, there was some substance to this claim.

Cuba's long adventure in Angola was an ordeal for its own economy. Known for its sugar cane and cigars, Havana's crusade on behalf

**1988**
Since the MPLA's tanks and artillery are on the Namibian border and Cuban fighter jets are menacing its airspace, South Africa begins a low-key withdrawal from the disputed territory.

**1994**
The Lusaka Protocol agreed upon in neighbouring Zambia puts a temporary halt to Angola's civil war. This allows the MPLA to buy arms from Eastern Europe and prepare for a final showdown with UNITA.

**1998**
With UNITA's diamond smuggling operations in Angola and Congo earning an estimated $200 million a year the United Nations passes Resolution 1173 to criminalise the sale of conflict diamonds.

**1998**
The country that used to be called Zaire is in freefall after the death of Mobutu Sese Seko the Second Congo War begins. Angola invades from the south and helps preserve Laurent-Désiré Kabila regime in Kinshasa.

**2002**
Years on the run in the bush have worn down UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi. After a protracted manhunt government commandos ambush his headquarters in Moxico Province and riddle him with bullets.

of the MPLA squandered untold sums and a reported 10,000 casualties. While technicians, logistics, and advisers from East Germany and the Soviet Union were provided, the bulk of the combat and actual campaigning was undertaken with Cuban manpower.

But Castro's troops met their match in the rough borderlands of Southern Angola. This was UNITA's territory and in the next phase of this long and gruelling war it was South Africa, who would stop at nothing to crush the Red menace at its doorstep.

## Where to, Cabinda?

The country recognised as Namibia today is a sparse and arid nation believed to be half the size of Texas and blessed with enormous mineral wealth. It fell under South Africa's control by way of the Great War when an Anglo-Boer force invaded in 1915 and annexed the territory from the Germans.

By the 1970s Namibia was South Africa's own colonial project; an empty frontier whose mines and coasts were vital to the Apartheid regime in Pretoria. It was also imperative that Angola, whose government was firmly in the Soviet camp, would not become a staging ground for revolutionaries intent on liberating Namibia.

But that is exactly what happened. Smarting from repeated attacks by UNITA guerrillas on its forces Cuba's generals inflicted retribution by training their own rebels – SWAPO. Specially trained cells would infiltrate the border and harass the South Africans and their UNITA proxies. But, in 1987, Havana and Pretoria finally had their reckoning day in south-eastern Angola.

Even if the Cubans were steadily supplied with Soviet tanks and SAMs, the arsenal of the South African Defence Force (SADF) was nothing to sniff at. The 155mm G5 was the best towed howitzer in the world. The wheeled Ratel APC was a nasty piece of work, able to carry an infantry squad or a 90mm gun that could wreck a T-55 or T-62 tank.

The threat posed by land mines made the SADF reliant on blast resistant trucks, forerunners of today's MRAPs. French Mirage fighter jets, British Centurion tanks, and Israeli Galil's – renamed R4's when built in South Africa – completed the selection of hard power.

It was in the country surrounding Cuito Cuanavale, a remote airfield in an isolated corner of southern Angola, where the SADF ultimately squared off against Soviet might. Rather than a set-piece battle, a series of decisive clashes in late 1987 until mid-1988 were fought to blunt a massive effort to cripple UNITA. The combined efforts of South African commandos, howitzer crews, and advisers embedded among UNITA units staved off total defeat and exacted a grim toll on FAPLA.

Yet in a matter of months the SADF had withdrawn to the Namibian border and pulled

*Training of FNLA soldiers in a camp in Zaire, 1973*

***Right:** The wars from 1965 until 2002 wrecked Angola's infrastructure and scarred several generations of children*

**2006**
Luanda announces a ceasefire between the military and Cabinda secessionists. With its national GDP soaring Angola manages to secure a second $2 billion loan from the China Export Import Bank.

**2008**
President Santos is Africa's longest serving head of state after Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. Parliamentary elections result in a landslide win for the MPLA and generous Chinese loans total $4.5 billion.

**2010**
On 8 January, gunmen ambush a bus carrying the Togo national football team to the Africa Cup of Nations in Cabinda City. The FLEC later takes responsibility for the attack.

**2014**
A series of trends influencing the energy market, from American shale to tensions with Russia, triggers a slow motion drop in global oil prices. Angola prepares to cut its national budget.

*Without foreign sponsors covering its expenses, UNITA turned to diamond smuggling as a source of revenue*

back their air support. To this day South Africa claims a qualitative victory over the Cubans and their FAPLA allies, who reportedly suffered 4,000 casualties. But the long view of history shows it was the SADF who eventually let go of Namibia while the Cubans never departed Angola in hasty retreat. Its formal withdrawal in 1989 came about with the gratitude and best wishes of President Santos, who then preoccupied himself with reconciling with a belligerent UNITA.

By the time the Cold War and Apartheid were over, Angola had an opportunity to reinvent itself. The MPLA endorsed national elections in 1992 but Jonas Savimbi's UNITA would keep fighting save for a brief respite after the 1994 Lusaka Protocol, a treaty that gave the Santos regime breathing room and time to rearm itself.

No longer favoured by its former sponsors, UNITA turned to child soldiers, looting, and diamond smuggling as to sustaining its war effort. Savimbi's timely death led to UNITA's simultaneous collapse. Only President Santos and the MPLA were left standing in the battered and mine-strewn country. Some four million Angolans were displaced within and without, their villages and towns in ruins. The numbers killed since 1975 were rounded off to 300,000 or 600,000, perhaps a million.

There was still the question of Cabinda, which had its own determined rebel group willing to shed blood for independence. For decades the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) had waged its own insurgency against Luanda, with often dismal results. During the 1990s the whole territory of Cabinda had less than 100,000 inhabitants and a small garrison sufficed for its occupation.

When foreign investments by oil companies and multinationals began pouring into Angola, a lot of it went to offshore development and inland refineries in Cabinda. This made it imperative for Luanda to declare the Cabinda rebellion over. In a matter of years, 60 per cent of Angola's oil extraction and production originated in Cabinda.

But following terrorist attacks committed by FLEC in 2010, and renewed violence last February, it's clear that Cabinda's patriots are more than willing to embarrass their overlords in Luanda. The unchallenged President Santos, whose daughter is recognised as Africa-reigning, female multibillionaire, no longer seems to fret over the seething anger in Cabinda. Besides, his army is large enough to keep the exclave in check. Will Cabinda prove the downfall of the Santos regime? Unlikely. But its salient features, the embers of rebellion and discontent, hints at the possibility the region might just explode sooner rather than later.

## FURTHER READING

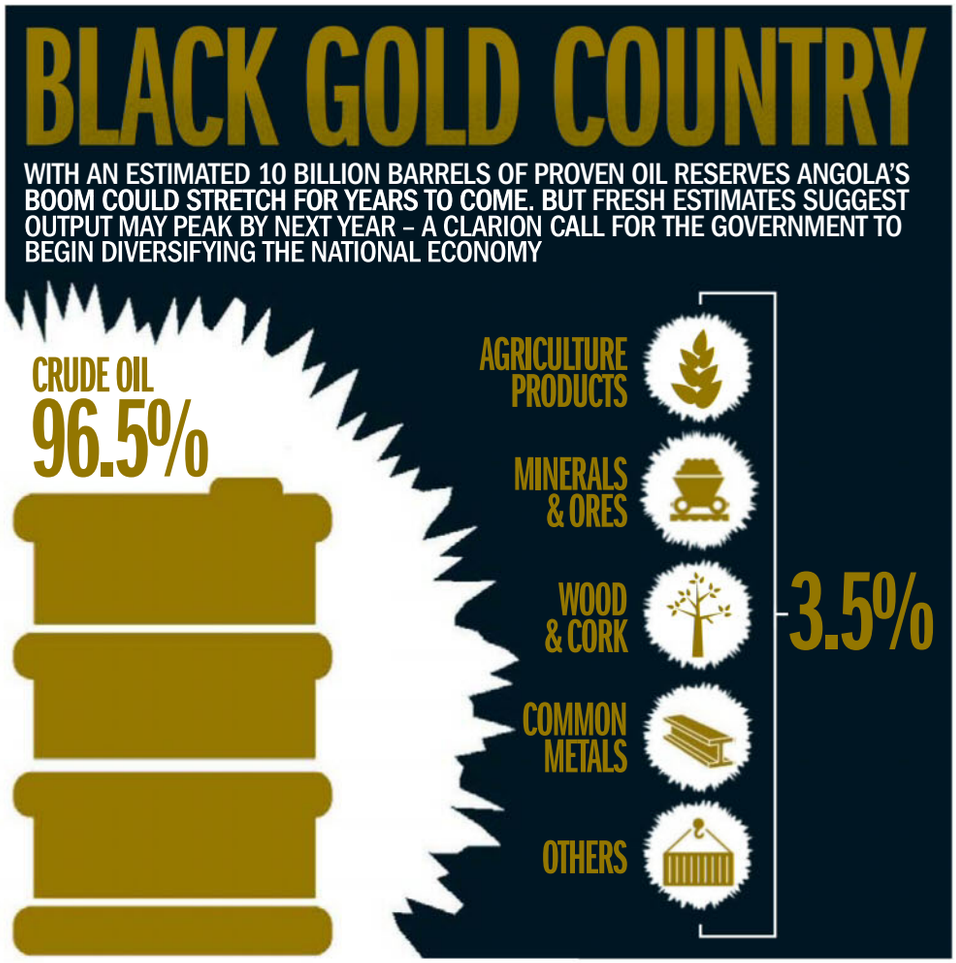
- **ANGOLA'S OIL INDUSTRY**- A CENTURY OF PROGRESS IN EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION BY TAKO KONING
- **RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION** BY LIEUTENANT STEPHANIE SCHEHARA KESSLER

**2015**

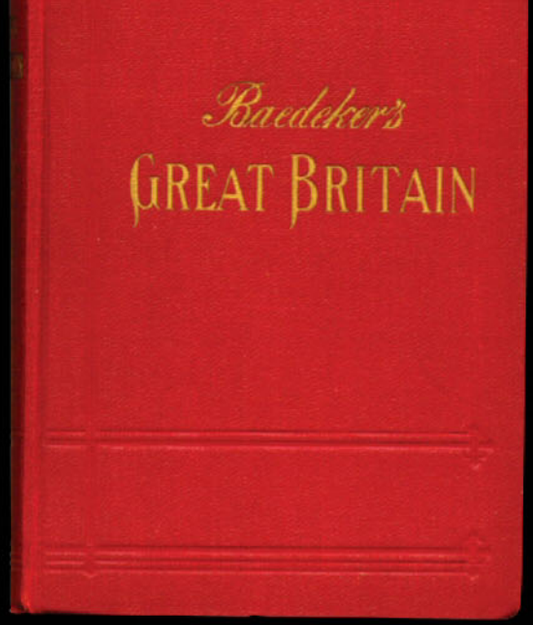
Two human rights activists are arrested by Angola's police in March before they could organise and carry out protests in Cabinda City. Very little peaceful dissent occurs in the exclave.

**2016**

A splinter group, calling itself Forças Armadas de Cabinda or the FAC, take credit for attacks on the Angolan army outside Cabinda City that result in at least 30 casualties.




*Images: Alamy, Getty, FreeVectorMaps.com, Thinkstock*




***Right:** Baedeker's famous red-covered guides were a common sight on bookshelves in both Germany and Britain throughout the 19th and 20th centuries*

# HITLER'S HOLIDAY TOUR FROM HELL

## UNLEASHING THE BAEDEKER BLITZ

WORDS **NICK SOLDINGER**

### How a travel guide gave the Nazis a steer on which areas of Britain should be bombed for being beautiful

On 13 May 2016, builders working at a former junior school in Bath were digging up what had once been a children's playground when they came across something sinister. As they cleared the earth away from the metre-long metal cylinder it became clear that what they were looking at was a terrifying relic from a darker age: an unexploded, 250-kilogram German bomb that had been dropped in April 1942. A bomb that still had the potential to obliterate anything within a 50-metre radius.

Army explosive experts dealt with the bomb safely, but its discovery unearthed a story that had been buried for nearly 75 years – the events of the so-called Baedeker raids. The Blitz Hitler's Luftwaffe unleashed against Britain during World War II is well known for targeting, as it did, large metropolitan areas of military or industrial importance. London was pounded because of its docks, Coventry for its aircraft plants, Newcastle for its shipyards – but what was so special about Bath? After all, the city hadn't been of military significance since Roundheads and Royalists had gone toe-to-toe there in 1643 at the height of the English Civil War.

So why did Hitler – who (by the time that bomb was dropped) was fighting a gargantuan, unwinnable war against the Soviet Union – commit vital resources to an attack on a place that was better known for its tea rooms than its military targets? The answer lies nearly 900 miles to the east in the German city of Lübeck on the Baltic Sea coast…

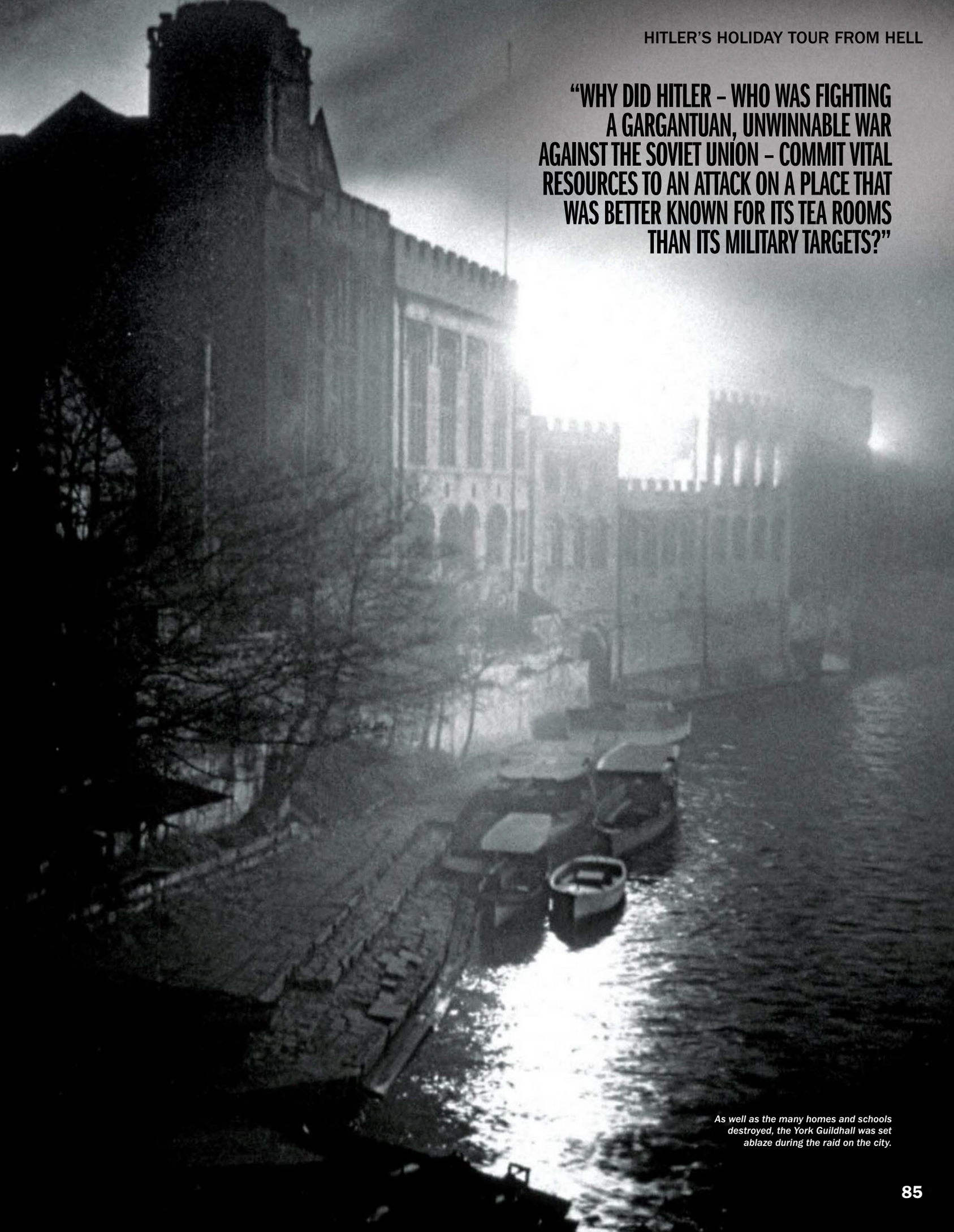
Britain's RAF had first bombed Germany in an audacious, morale-raising raid on 25 August 1940. Berlin was the target and although it'd caused scant damage, a huge psychological blow had been dealt. Despite Luftwaffe boss Hermann Göring's boast just a year before that not one enemy bomb would fall on German soil, it'd been proven that the country wasn't immune to air attacks.

Not that those attacks would initially amount to much. When the war started, the RAF had just 280 light bombers made up of planes such as the Whitworth Whitley, which had carried out the Berlin raid. These planes were ill-suited to the key role that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had dreamt up for Bomber Command.

With Britain's army swept ingloriously into the sea at Dunkirk, and without a foothold in continental Europe, aerial bombing was – Churchill believed – Britain's best hope of hitting back at the Third Reich. "The [RAF's] fighters may be our salvation," he declared in 1940 shortly after Spitfires and Hurricanes had seen off the German invasion during the Battle of Britain, "but the bombers alone provide us with the means of victory." Germany, he'd decided, could be blasted into submission.

To complete the task, a new breed of heavy bomber was rushed into production, most noticeably the Avro Lancaster, and, in 1942, a new ruthless supremo appointed as head of Bomber Command, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Travers Harris, the man history would remember as 'Bomber' Harris. Churchill now had the right machines to flatten Germany, and in Harris he had a man who would get the job

**"WHY DID HITLER – WHO WAS FIGHTING A GARGANTUAN, UNWINNABLE WAR AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION – COMMIT VITAL RESOURCES TO AN ATTACK ON A PLACE THAT WAS BETTER KNOWN FOR ITS TEA ROOMS THAN ITS MILITARY TARGETS?"**



*As well as the many homes and schools destroyed, the York Guildhall was set ablaze during the raid on the city.*

done. Now all he needed was official licence to pursue a policy of total war and, on 14 February 1942, the British government issued the Area Bombing Directive to the RAF, giving it the mandate to go after civilian targets as a matter of policy. Almost immediately, Harris set about turning Churchill's vision of laying waste to Germany into a reality. He decided Lübeck was where he'd test out his new ideas about strategic area bombing first.

Although a port, Lübeck was a cultural centre and of little military significance. As such it was barely defended and Harris saw in the elegant town, famed for its medieval architecture, a soft, low-risk target. The date of the raid was set for the night of 28 March 1942 when seasonal and climatic conditions were favourable. There had be a full moon so the waters that fed the city – the Elbe-Lübeck Canal, the Trave and Wakenitz rivers – would all be lit like landing strips, while the seasonal hoar-frost would ensure clear visibility. Lübeck, quite literally, could not be missed.

As Harris later noted in his memoirs, "Lübeck was the first German city to go up in flames. It was not a vital target, but it seemed to me better to destroy an industrial town of moderate importance than to fail to destroy a large industrial city. The main object of the attack was to learn to what extent a first wave of aircraft could guide a second wave to the aiming point by starting a conflagration: I ordered a half an hour interval between the two waves in order to allow the fires to get a good hold before the second wave arrived. In all, 234 aircraft were dispatched and dropped 144 tonnes of incendiaries and 160 tonnes of high explosives. At least half of the town was destroyed, mainly by fire. It was conclusively proved that even the small force I had then could destroy the greater part of a town of secondary importance."

**"BOMB EVERY BUILDING IN BRITAIN MARKED WITH THREE STARS IN THE BAEDEKER GUIDE"**

**- Baron Gustav Braun von Stumm**

With so few defences, some of Harris' bombers had attacked from just 600-2,400 metres lower than they'd usually bomb from – devastating the town. Blockbuster bombs – powerful enough to shake the roofs off of houses – were dropped by the first wave starting the initial fires, while incendiary bombs were then scattered over the roofless buildings by the second wave, setting the city ablaze. Around 62 per cent of all buildings in Lübeck were affected by the bombing, causing around 1,000 casualties and 15,000 people to lose their homes.

"The damage is really enormous," Nazi Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary a few days after the attack. "I've been shown a newsreel of the destruction. One can well imagine how such a bombardment affects the population. We can't get away from the fact that the English air raids have increased in scope and importance. It's horrible. If they can be continued on these lines, they might conceivably have a demoralising effect on the population."

With private concerns about how the Lübeck raid and others like it might wear down the resolve of the German population, the Nazis began plotting retaliatory attacks. Of course, Germany had already tried bombing Britain into submission once before. Its nine-month Blitz of the country had brought widespread urban destruction but had fundamentally failed to break morale. The whole costly, seemingly pointless exercise had eventually come to an

***Above:** Air Chief Marshall 'Bomber' Harris who ordered the attack on Lübeck – the raid that prompted the Baedeker Blitz*

# SAVED FROM THE BONFIRE

## Why the Baedeker Guides were so revered by the Nazis and how they were used for ideological ends

**One of the most powerful images associated with the Nazi era is that of public book burnings. Organised by German students it saw gangs of young fanatics flinging works of 'subversive' literature onto giant bonfires during dramatic night-time ceremonies. The works torched were those deemed too Jewish, left-wing, pacifist, or un-German. In reality, this meant that anything some local swastika-sporting crank decided was 'immoral' ended up on the pyres, and thousands of books were destroyed this way. The Baedeker Guides, though, were never among them.**

**These guides – named after Karl Baedeker the Prussian publisher who founded the brand, and passed it down to his sons – had been around since 1827, and by the rise of National Socialism were very much part of German national life. Their popularity, though, wasn't just down to the maps, timetables and tourist insights they offered. The guides, which were very much products of the Imperial age, were also stuffed full of stereotypical nonsense that the Nazis in particular could approve of, namely Germans equal good, foreigners equal indolent, untrustworthy or smelly.**

**In fact, the Nazis not only rubber-stamped the Baedeker Guides, but actually commissioned several including a guidebook for the German Army of Occupation in Poland, while helping to 'edit' others as they saw fit. They also restricted to whom the various guides could be sold.**

**Despite the firm's Leipzig offices being destroyed during an air raid on 4 December 1943, the company survived the war and continues to publish to this day – although its well-respected guides now offer a more balanced view of the world.**

***German students burning books deemed a threat to the Nazi state in 1933. The Baedeker Guides weren't among them, but they were used by Nazi propagandists***

end in May 1941, when the Luftwaffe – in the build-up to the following month's invasion of the Soviet Union – had the vast bulk its resources diverted eastward.

By early 1942, what remained of Hitler's air force in the west was no longer in a position to mount a sustained, large-scale, aerial offensive. It could, however, launch as Goebbels put it, "Rigorous reprisal raids [on] centres of culture, especially those with little anti-aircraft defences."

The first city to be attacked was the quiet cathedral city of Exeter in Devon, when German bombs smashed into it on the night of 23-24 April. Up until then Exeter's inhabitants had been largely untouched by the war. They now found themselves on the front line with 73 civilians killed and 20 seriously injured. It was a menacing foretaste of what was to come.

The day after the first Exeter raid, German propagandist Baron Gustav Braun von Stumm released a statement declaring it a success and warning that the Nazis would now, "Go out and bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the *Baedeker Guide*." This reference to the popular German travel guides of the same name made for a neat sound bite that captured the public's imagination. It also infuriated von Stumm's boss, Goebbels, who was keen to sell the British attacks as acts of terrorism, while the German response was to be spun as even-handed and justified – not a deliberate attempt to destroy Britain's cultural treasures. But that's exactly what the raids were intended to do, and the phrase 'The Baedeker Blitz' was born.


*The Baedeker Blitz caught the public's imagination both in Germany and Britain where it was soon mocked by newspaper cartoonists*

# GUIDE TO DESTRUCTION

## How the guide may have helped Hitler decide which cities to bomb…

Of all the countries covered by the Baedeker Guides, Britain fared the best. The reason was three-fold. Firstly, the original guides were inspired by a series of travel books produced by English publisher John Murray, which had pioneered the genre. Secondly Britain, as the greatest power of the Victorian age, was seen as the cultural benchmark for other countries – a nascent Germany included – to aspire to. Finally, by the 20th century, Britain was the second-biggest consumer of Baedeker Guides after Germany, with many translated into English. In fact, the phrase 'baedekering' even briefly entered the English language as a term for travelling through a country in order to write about it.

The books included maps and detailed information on routes, accommodation and attractions and from 1846 onwards used an innovative star system to rate them – making them very much the first modern tourist guidebooks. It was this star system that Baron von Stumm was referring to when he described how the Nazis would now, "Bomb every building in Britain marked with three stars in the *Baedeker Guide*." Here's what the 1937 *Guide To Great Britain* had to say about three of the cities the Nazis attempted to flatten.

## BATH 25-26 APRIL 1942

"The chief winter spa in Britain is a handsome city of 68,000 inhabitants… is unrivalled among provincial English towns for its combination of archaeological, historic, scenic and social interest. It is a city of crescents and terraces, built in a substantial Palladian style of 'Bath Stone', and rising tier above tier to a height of about 6,000 feet. Bath owes its external appearance largely to the architect John Wood and is an admirable specimen of 18th-century town planning."

*Bath's St Andrew's Church, which had stood for over 800 years, was so badly damaged in the bombing that it had to be demolished*

**DAMAGE** APPROXIMATELY 417 KILLED, AND 19,000 BUILDINGS DESTROYED

## NORWICH 27-28 APRIL, 8-9 MAY 1942

"The cathedral preserves its original Norman structure more than any other English cathedral. It possesses numerous other interesting buildings, too. Overall, Norwich is charming, beautiful and especially admirable." As well as going into detail about the many delights Norwich can offer, it also includes a detailed map of the city showing the position of its Norman castle and cathedral, as well as its 15th-century Guildhall. All of these were damaged in the first raid on the night of 27-28 April.

***Below:** A church service is held in the bombed out remains of Norwich Cathedral which was damaged during the April air raids*

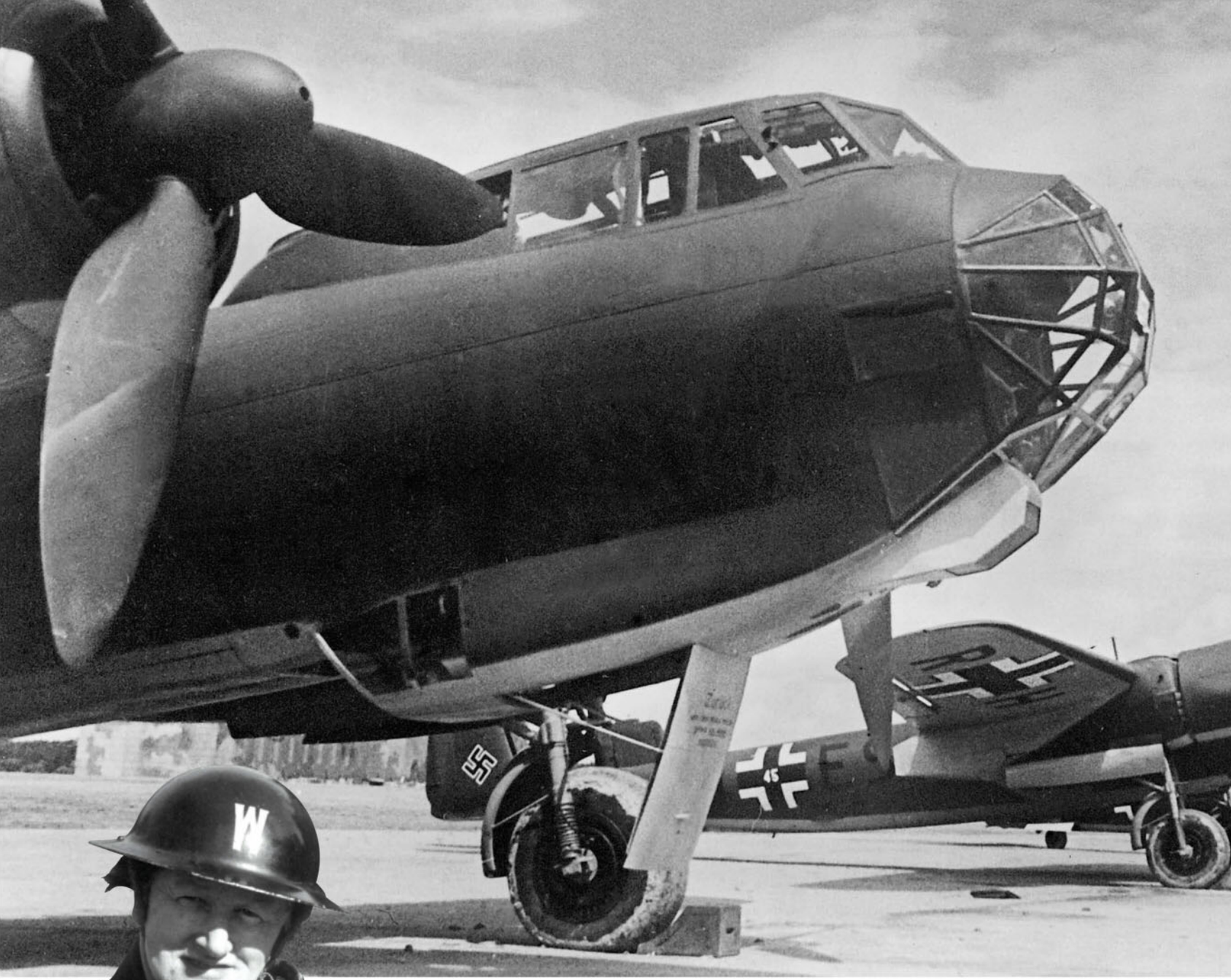
**DAMAGE** MORE THAN 850 KILLED OR WOUNDED, OVER 20,000 HOUSES DESTROYED

## YORK 28-29 MAY 1942

"An ancient city with 84,800 inhabitants and the capital of Yorkshire. It is situated on the River Ouse, in the centre of the wide and fertile Vale of York. The ancient walls are still standing, many of the streets are crooked and narrow, and there are quite a few quaint, old houses." The accompanying map of the city shows the magnificent 15th-century Guildhall, the Victorian railway station, and a medieval church all of which were set ablaze during the raids.

***Right:** York railway station was hit during the raid, as was the 10.15am train from King's Cross to Edinburgh, which was laden with passengers*

**DAMAGE** 92 KILLED, HUNDREDS WOUNDED, 9,500+ BUILDINGS DAMAGED OR DESTROYED




## "HAVING UNLEASHED THEIR BOMBS THE LARGELY UNOPPOSED GERMAN BOMBERS NOW STRAFED THE STREETS WITH MACHINE-GUN FIRE AS TERRORISED CIVILIANS FLED TO THE SHELTERS"

On 26 April, after Harris launched another devastating raid – this time against the Baltic port of Rostock – Hitler addressed the Reichstag in Berlin's Kroll Opera House, promising retribution. "If in England the idea should prevail of carrying on air warfare against the civilian population with new methods," he thundered, "then I should like right now to state the following to the whole world… May [Churchill] not again wail and whimper if I am now forced to give a response that will bring much suffering to his own people. From now on, I will retaliate blow for blow until this criminal falls and his work dies."

***Left:** An air raid warden cradles a homeless child in her arms, following the recent Baedeker raid on Norwich*

He was true to his word, and that same night Bath was hit. The city, which was completely undefended, was soon set ablaze. The raid killed 417 people and left 19,000 buildings destroyed or damaged including the city's splendid Georgian Assembly Rooms.

As with the Exeter raids this attack was largely carried out by between 30-40 Dornier 217 heavy bombers from Luftflotte 3, each one capable of carrying a bomb payload in the region of 3,000 kilograms. As before, two sorties were flown with each raid separated by two to three hours. It was a pattern of terror and destruction that would be followed throughout the Baedeker Blitz. Goebbels, writing in his diary after the raids, noted that Hitler intended to, "Repeat these raids night after night until the English are sick and tired of terror attacks and he shares my opinion

**"MAY THIS MAN NOT AGAIN WAIL AND WHIMPER IF I AM NOW FORCED TO GIVE A RESPONSE THAT WILL BRING MUCH SUFFERING TO HIS OWN PEOPLE. FROM NOW ON, I WILL RETALIATE BLOW FOR BLOW UNTIL THIS CRIMINAL FALLS AND HIS WORK DIES"** - Adolf Hitler

*Dornier Do 217 heavy bombers like these did much of the bombing during the Baedeker Blitz*

# BATTLE OF THE BEAMS

**How radio waves guided Baedeker bomber crews to their targets in the dark. And how Britain managed to stop them…**

*The British first learned of the knickebein guidance system after discovering intel on a downed German bomber in 1940*

**To help Luftwaffe crews navigate over Britain's blacked out countryside at night, German engineers came up with something called knickebein. British intelligence first became aware of it when a German bomber downed in 1940 was searched and intel on board made mention of the curious word. Investigations revealed that knickebein ('crooked leg') was the codename for a new system that used radio waves to guide German pilots to their targets.**

**The idea was simple: a single radio wave (or beam) was transmitted at Britain from mainland Europe. Using an adapted version of a tracking device known as the Lorenz system – used pre-war by commercial airlines to help guide planes into airports – the beam from a single transmitter would guide the bombers towards their target. A second beam, transmitted from another part of Europe, would cross the first beam at the point where the bombs were to be dropped. All a pilot need do was follow the first beam until he reached the intersection with the second beam.**

**Used throughout the Blitz and during the Baedeker raids, this system and later higher-frequency versions were eventually rendered useless by the British countermeasures, which involved transmitting rogue beams to baffle German pilots.**

absolutely that cultural centres, health resorts and civilian centres must be attacked... There is no other way of bringing the English to their senses. They belong to a class of human beings with whom you can only talk after you have first knocked out their teeth."

The following night it was Norwich's turn to be bombed. Again, it was a city with next to no means of defending itself and one that represented no real military value. More than 90 tonnes of bombs smashed into the city killing or wounding 850 people, and destroying nearly 20,000 houses.

Eyewitness John Alpe was a seven-year-old boy at the time but vividly recalled the raid many years later for the BBC's 'WW2 People's War' project. "For me it started at around 11.30pm when I was awakened by the voice of my father, a WWI veteran, loudly shouting, 'Bombs, bombs!' The family was at that instant, in their beds, presumably sleeping. That is, mum and dad, two elder sisters and me. I was youngest and my dear mum must have grabbed me from bed and rapidly descended the stairs, entered the living room then took a restricted flying dive with me under our dining table. We were all just in time. The first wave of Luftwaffe aircraft were dropping their high explosive bombs, softening up the city for the later incendiary attack to take over with their devastating fiercely burning fires..."

York became the next target and was attacked the next night. By this stage of the war, air-raid sirens had been sounded nearly 800 times across the rooftops of this ancient northern city; almost all had been false alarms. When they screamed out again on the night of 28 April, many of city's inhabitants rolled over in bed and tried to go back to sleep. It was only when the streets started to explode around them that the vast majority began to run for their lives.

Having unleashed their bombs the largely unopposed German bombers now strafed the streets with machine-gun fire as terrorised civilians fled to the shelters. The raid lasted 90 minutes and at the end of it over 300 lay dead or wounded including five nuns, killed when the roof of the 17th-century convent they were in collapsed. A further 9,500 buildings were damaged, including the 15th-century Guild Hall, a medieval church, and numerous schools.

No city in Britain, no matter how inconsequential to the country's war effort, could now consider itself safe from German attack. But a week later, it was Exeter – the original Baedeker target – that found itself bombed again. This time, though, the city would not escape so easily. On the night of 3-4 May 1942, German bombers attacked the city for the third time in ten days, dropping incendiary bombs and spewing machine-gun fire into the streets. "It was a night of terror for the Exeter people," recorded German bomber pilot Ernst Von Kugel after the raid. "When I approached this town the bright reflections guided me. Over the town I saw whole streets of houses on fire, flames burst out of windows and doors, devouring the roofs.

"People were running everywhere and firemen were frantically trying to deal with flames," he continued. "It was a fantastic sight – no one who saw it will forget the greatness of the disaster. We thought of the thousands of men, women and children, the victims of our deadly visit, but we thought of our Führer and the command he gave 'Revenge'. With cold calculation we carried out our orders."

*Still wearing his pyjamas, a fireman drinks an early morning cup of tea by the ruins of shops destroyed in the Exeter blitz*

For those on the ground, the scenes they encountered were far from fantastic – eyewitness Brian Pollard was 18 years old at the time: "We were woken by the air raid siren. Hearing the sound of explosions we thought it wise to dress and seek shelter in the basement; but we didn't get that far. The explosions seemed to come very near and we had a shower of incendiary bombs. The latter were 12-15 inches long and two or three inches in diameter. They contained magnesium and, on contact, burned white hot and spat burning fragments. Two such bombs came through the windows of the first floor front bedroom, already shattered by the explosions. We tried dousing them with water but the furnishings were soon blazing. I discovered that more incendiary bombs had come through the roof and the attic was well alight and also the buildings opposite and adjacent. There was nothing for it but to leave.

"The nearest public air raid shelter was five hundred yards away," he continued. "It was hazardous and not without incident but by helping each other we reached the shelter as did many others. But it was more frightening inside the shelter than outside it, where at least the percussion of the explosions was more dispersed and you could see how near or far the falling masonry was. Burning buildings close by made it very hot inside the shelter, and the noise was coming from everywhere. Then came machine-gunning. The static tanks were perforated and several inches of water entered the shelter. Eventually, the planes retired, and although the fires continued to burn, people began to move. Then dawn came."

When Pollard and his family emerged from the darkness, they discovered their beautiful city was now a smoking, charred ruin. Over

## "EXETER WAS THE JEWEL OF THE WEST. WE HAVE DESTROYED THAT JEWEL AND THE LUFTWAFFE WILL RETURN TO FINISH THE JOB" - Lord Haw-Haw

1,500 houses had been destroyed, with a further 2,700 seriously damaged. A further 400 shops, 150 offices, 50-plus warehouses and 36 pubs and clubs had also vanished in a single night. As well as killing 156 civilians and injuring 563 more, 30 acres of the city were devastated with many of its ancient buildings smashed or incinerated. Its 15th-century cathedral had been badly damaged, while many of its Tudor, Georgian and Victorian landmarks were lost forever. The city library, meanwhile, had been reduced to a bonfire of smouldering embers along with an estimated 1 million books and historic documents. It would take Exeter more than 20 years to recover.

Of all the Baedeker raids, this one on Exeter was the most destructive. "Exeter was the jewel of the West," the English-speaking Nazi propagandist Lord Haw-Haw told British listeners during a broadcast on 4 May. "We have destroyed that jewel and the Luftwaffe will return to finish the job."

The Luftwaffe did indeed return – on 8-9 May to bomb Norwich in a raid that was significantly less effective thanks to radar and fighter cover. While the last raid most commonly associated with the Baedeker Blitz took place on 6 June when Canterbury (described in the *Baedeker Guide To Great Britain* as, "The ecclesiastical metropolis of England,") was bombed for the third time in a week, the worst of the raids on the city took place on 1 June – seeing 3,600 incendiary bombs and 130 high explosive bombs dropped on it in attempt to destroy its historic cathedral. In the event the 11th-century architectural masterpiece survived thanks to firewatchers throwing hundreds of incendiary devices from its roof. Much of the city's medieval centre was, however, destroyed.

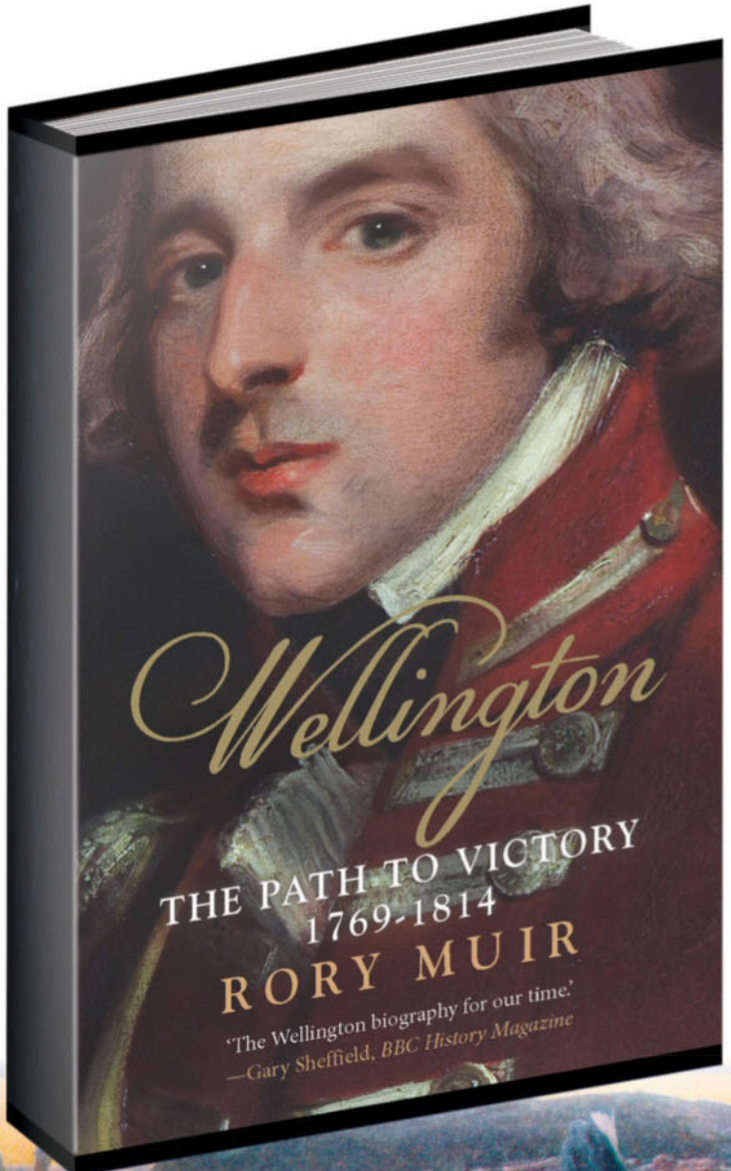
Although the Luftwaffe continued to make indiscriminate smaller-scale raids on British towns, by the summer of 1942 the Baedeker Blitz was over. With the conflict against the Soviet Union taking on epic proportions, Hitler's already overstretched war machine could ill afford to commit precious resources to an aerial bombing campaign that seemed to have so little effect on the morale of the people it was supposedly terrorising.

Britain had endured the Blitz. It had now endured the Baedeker raids, which had killed 1,637 civilians and destroyed or damaged over 50,000 homes as well as many buildings of cultural significance. Yet the spirit of its people seemed stronger than ever. As a tactic, the area bombing of a civilian population had been proven to be largely ineffective. The British knew this better than anyone and yet, under Churchill, doggedly persisted with the practice right up until the end of the war. In fact, a disproportionate amount of Britain's war effort was given to Bomber Command as it absorbed shockingly high casualty rates (around 50 per cent), just so that it could mete out what amounted to an increasingly murderous punishment of Germany's civilian population. This policy of annihilation would reach its dreadful apotheosis at Dresden in the dying days of the war.

*Images: Alamy, Getty, Mary Evans*

# BOOK REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves




## WELLINGTON

### THE PATH TO VICTORY 1769-1814

**Writer:** Rory Muir **Publisher:** Yale University Press
**Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

THE EARLY YEARS OF NAPOLEON'S NEMESIS ARE COMPREHENSIVELY COVERED IN THIS DETAILED AND HIGHLY ACCESSIBLE BOOK

Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, is one of Britain's greatest generals who rose from a relatively obscure Anglo-Irish background to become a legendary soldier and statesman whose military career ranged from successes in India, Spain and Portugal to the titanic clash at Waterloo where he defeated his most deadly foe Napoleon Bonaparte. Wellington's defeated of the French emperor sealed the fate of Europe and changed the course of history. It is largely thanks to Wellington that Britain retained a unique pre-eminence for the rest of the 19th century.

There have been many biographies and histories written about the Iron Duke but none have been quite so detailed and precise as Rory Muir's *Wellington: The Path to Victory 1769-1814*. The book is the first chapter of a two-part biography and covers the period from his birth in 1769 through his military successes in India and finally the Peninsular War where Wellington fought a prolonged but ultimately triumphant campaign to eject the French from Iberia. It is a brave, but beneficial move that the book ends with Napoleon's first abdication in 1814. This enables the Peninsular campaign to discussed in full without the future shadow of Waterloo taking precedence.

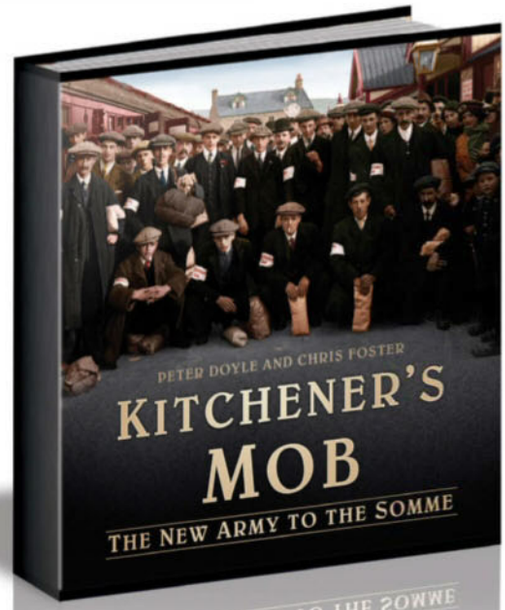
The book is exceptionally detailed but manages to stay highly readable throughout and serves as probably the most comprehensive guide to Wellington's early years ever published. It is not just an account of Wellington as a general but also as a child, suitor and politician. The result is a remarkable insight into the personal transformation of a man who began life as an unpromising individual and turned into an exceptional commander who grabbed the mantle of history and took it in his stride.

*The forlorn hope at Badajoz takes cover before storming the city walls*

# KITCHENER'S MOB: THE NEW ARMY TO THE SOMME

**Writers:** Peter Doyle and Chris Foster **Publisher:** The History Press **Price:** £25
**Released:** Out now

SUPERB REFERENCE WORK DETAILING HOW BRITAIN'S FIRST HUGE CITIZEN ARMY WAS RAISED, TRAINED AND MARCHED OFF TO WAR




At the outbreak of World War I the British army numbered around 400,000. By its end, 5,704,416 men had passed through its ranks – the equivalent to 22 per cent of the UK's male population at the time. Incredibly, around 2.5 million of these were volunteers – men who answered their country's call, often joining up enthusiastically with work mates and family members before marching off to the meat grinder of the Western Front's trenches.

*Kitchener's Mob* is a superbly presented book that seeks to explain that phenomenon through a variety of sources. The book's structure is quite simple. It starts by introducing us to Lord Kitchener (of the 'Your Country Needs You' recruiting poster) and the type of organisation the British army was at the start of the war.

It then feeds us through the recruitment and selection process, explaining how the volunteers were organised with men grouped together largely based on their community. We're then shown how these so-called Pals Battalions were equipped, armed and fed before we're marched up to the front with them, led through the horror of the Battle of the Somme and then shown their grave stones in the other side.

The whole thing is woven together using a rich mix of words and imagery. As well as newspaper articles, and first-hand accounts we get original photos, recruitment posters ("Are You A Man Or A Mouse?" screams one), and humorous postcards as well as contemporary photography of authentic uniforms, boots, cap badges, weapons and patriotic paraphernalia. The result is a bit like wandering through a spectacularly well put-together exhibition. Truly fascinating stuff.

**"THE RESULT IS A BIT LIKE WANDERING THROUGH A SPECTACULARLY WELL PUT-TOGETHER EXHIBITION. TRULY FASCINATING STUFF"**

# THE SPY IN HITLER'S INNER CIRCLE

**Writer:** Paul Paillole **Publisher:** Casemate Publishers
**Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

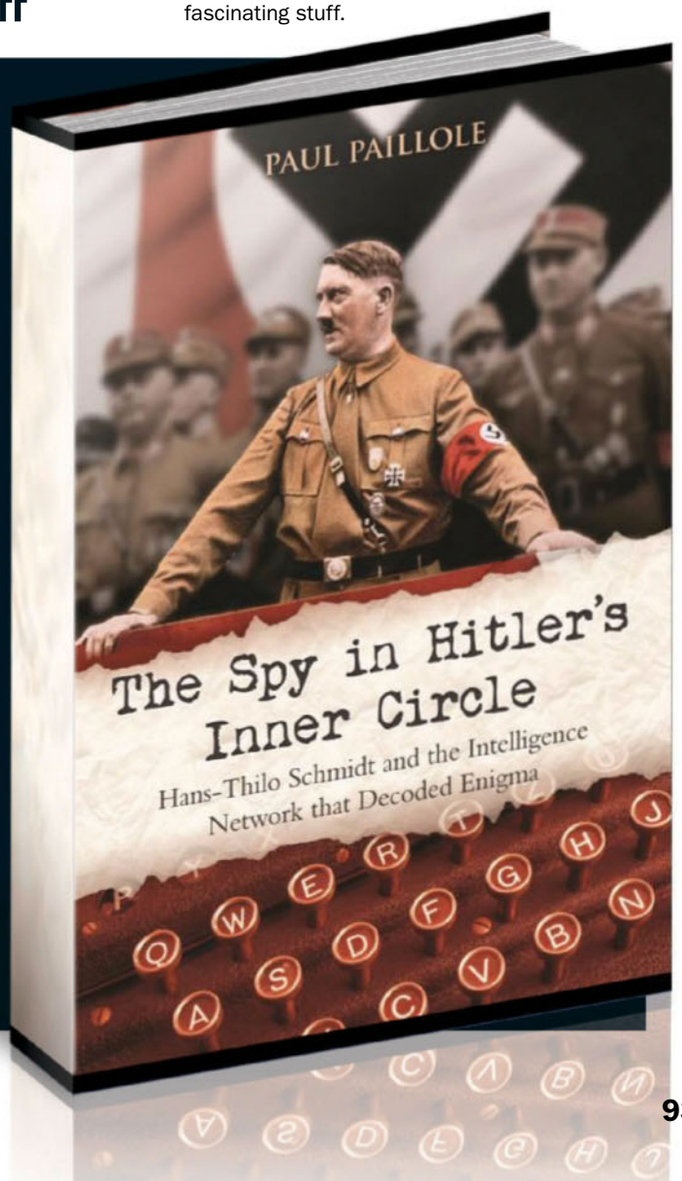
JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT THE STORY OF THE ENIGMA CODE COULDN'T GET ANY MORE INTRIGUING, A NEW CHAPTER COMES TO LIGHT...

**The truth about Alan Turing breaking the German Enigma code at Bletchley Park lay buried for decades after World War II ended. Today, it is recognised as one of the turning points of the war, a towering achievement that shortened the war and saved incalculable numbers of lives on both sides. What is less known is just how big a part a secret agent by the name of Hans-Thilo Schmidt played in all that.**

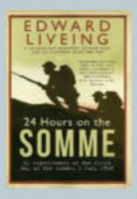
**Schmidt was former German army officer who had been invalided out of World War I after being gassed. The economic crisis that had crippled Germany in the wake of Versailles treaty had left him impoverished and bitter. His brother Rudolf had survived the war and after being promoted to lieutenant colonel had been appointed as head of the cipher office at the Germany War Ministry. He'd then used his influence to get the then-unemployed Hans-Thilo a job there, where Hans-Thilo soon found himself working with the new Enigma encryption machine.**

**Seeing an opportunity to make some money, the debt-ridden Schmidt contacted French Intelligence and from the mid-1930s onwards began selling them not just information about how the machine worked, but details of Hitler's strategic plans from deep within the heart of the Third Reich; everything from information on German rearmament to the reoccupation of the Rhineland. While Schmidt didn't provide the key to unlock Enigma it's clear from this book that he did provide the tools that ultimately helped Turing to pick the lock.**

**French author Paillole's work has been expertly translated into English and the result is a fast-moving narrative that reads at times more like a John Le Carré spy thriller rather than a historical text. A staggering story.**



# ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING




## 24 HOURS ON THE SOMME: MY EXPERIENCES OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE SOMME 1 JULY 1916

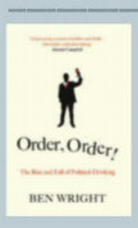
Leading his platoon of 50 men over the top, 20-year-old Edward Liveing would become one of the lucky ones who survived the carnage on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. This book is his vivid recounting of one man caught up in one of history's most famous battles and, unlike many others, lived to tell the tale. Presented in a simple easy-to-read layout, this is a must for anyone interested in learning about the true horrors of the Western Front.


## KLEINKRIEG: THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE WITH GUERRILLA WARFARE, FROM CLAUSEWITZ TO HITLER

The concept of guerrilla warfare has been around for millennia, although the term has only been in use since the 18th century. Since then, there have been many strategies both on how to fight a guerrilla war and against it, with this book focusing on the German perspective. The author, Charles D Melson, is the Chief Historian for the US Marine Corps and so this book sees him take a step back from his usual topic of choice, the US army. This does not stop Melson from meticulously detailing the German philosophy of guerrilla warfare from the Napoleonic era to the Third Reich.


## VOICES FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Whether told from first-hand accounts or via the voices of friends and family, this is a collection of compelling stories that have real power against the backdrop of their historical context. They've been compiled into loose categories – like those who were children in Kindertransport program or the first experiences of Brits doing the patriotic thing and signing up to defend their country – introduced by a brief and liberally illustrated, allowing the stories themselves to do the legwork of holding the reader's attention.




## ORDER, ORDER! THE RISE AND FALL OF POLITICAL DRINKING

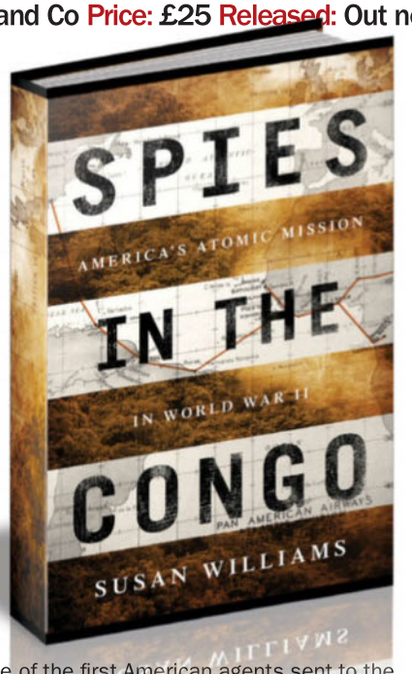
Since the first Prime Minister, politicians have used alcohol as the oil that lubricates the relationships between parties, their voters and the journalists who keep a mindful watch. Ben Wright, the BBC's Chief Political Correspondent explores the highs and lows of Westminster's spirits and ales and how all those unsociable hours and highly stressful situations have called for a stiff drink or two. This is an interesting piece of research into those who have led and influenced the country, and just how a tumbler of something strong has influenced their leadership skills for better or worse.

# SPIES IN THE CONGO

## AMERICA'S ATOMIC MISSION IN WORLD WAR II

**Author:** Susan Williams **Publisher:** C Hurst and Co **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

### A DEEPLY ENGROSSING ACCOUNT OF AMERICA'S STRUGGLE TO KEEP THE BOMB OUT OF HITLER'S HANDS




One of the real pleasures of history is the fact that there are always new stories to be discovered. Susan Williams has pieced together the details of a story so enormous it seems incredible that most people will have heard nothing about it before.

During the race to build the first atomic bomb, it was quickly recognised that a good supply or Uranium was needed. It was also recognised that the best deposits were to be found in the Congo. In fact, simply saying that these were the best deposits does not do them justice – they were so far superior to other known deposits as to approach fantasy levels.

The problem was that the Congo was a Belgian colony and, following the fall of Belgium to Nazi forces, there was a risk that this almost priceless commodity might fall into the hands of Hitler's scientists.

As the prologue of this book makes clear, more than half of the precious ore had already been shipped to the USA before the story of the 'spies in the Congo' actually begins, but this does not diminish the enjoyment of what turns out to be a thrilling tale.

A vast amount of research is evident, and Williams tells a story that is sometimes comical (one of the first American agents sent to the Congo got so deep into his cover that he spent more time studying gorillas than searching for intelligence on enemy agents) sometimes tragic (another agent went temporarily insane during his spell in the country) but always riveting.

# ELEGY: THE FIRST DAY ON THE SOMME

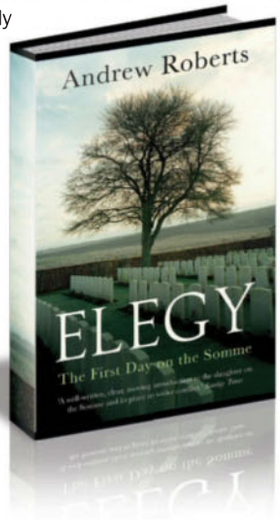
**Writer:** Andrew Roberts **Publisher:** Head Zeus **Price:** £8.99 **Released:** Out now

### A DECENT ENOUGH ACCOUNT OF THE COSTLIEST ENCOUNTER IN BRITISH MILITARY HISTORY – JUST IN TIME FOR THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATIONS

With the centenary of the greatest disaster in British military history upon us, it's no surprise that the history book market would start filling up with accounts of the Battle of the Somme.

This one by Andrew Roberts focuses on the battle's opening day, which saw the British army suffer a staggering 57,471 casualties with nearly a third of those killed in action. As one might expect, it makes for highly emotive reading and Roberts does a decent enough job of weaving the various strands of his narrative together from numerous secondary sources that include the particularly effective use of written testimonies from the archive at the Imperial War Museum.

The story is, of course very well known: The week-long bombardment designed to annihilate every soldier in the German trenches; the fact that it didn't because the Kaiser's troops had such a deep dug-out system; Kitchener's army made up of brothers and chums; 100,000 cheery volunteers going over the top only to be scythed down by withering machine-gun fire… it's not that there's anything wrong with retelling such an epic tale it's just that this book tells us nothing we don't already know. It's well written, for sure, and it carries you along easily enough but it can't match Martin Middlebrook's 1971 classic *The First Day On The Somme* which used many first-hand accounts of men who'd actually survived the slaughter. Recently reissued by Penguin, it's a better place to start for novices and a book that any serious military historian should find room for on their bookshelf. As for *Elegy: The First Day On The Somme*? It's not that it's a bad book, it's just that it feels a bit unnecessary. File under 'surplus to requirements'.



# BLUFF, BLUSTER, LIES AND SPIES:

## THE LINCOLN FOREIGN POLICY, 1861–1865

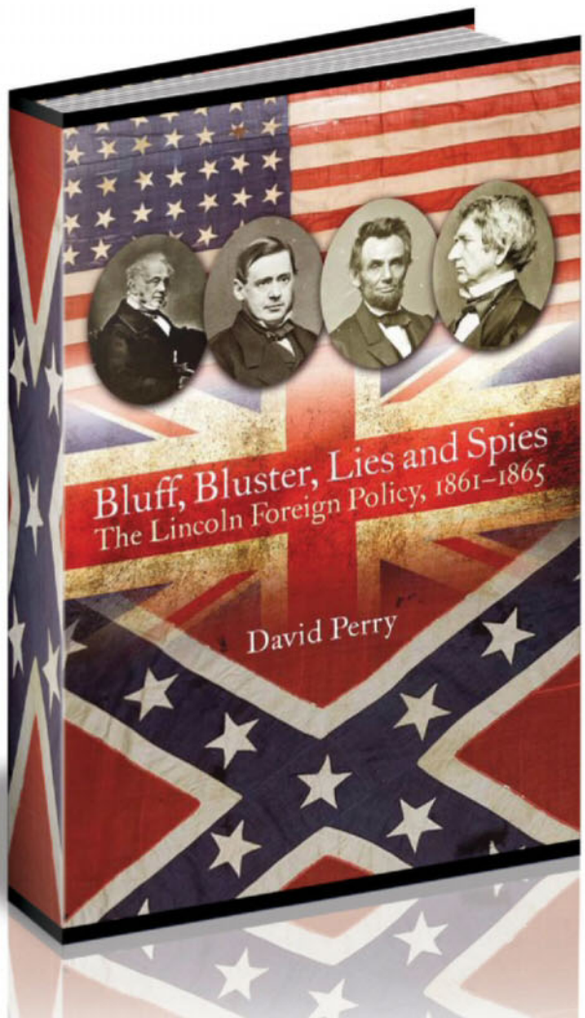
**Author:** David Perry **Publisher:** Casemate **Price:** £19.99
**Released:** Out now

### AN ENORMOUSLY IMPORTANT STORY FAILS TO GET THE TREATMENT IT DESERVES

David Perry's book delves inside an important story — the foreign policy decisions of the Lincoln administration during the American Civil War. The Union faced multiple challenges, including the obvious threat of a permanent breakaway by the seceding southern states. More than this, foreign powers including Great Britain, France, Russia and Japan were keeping a watchful eye on the situation, ready to intervene if it appeared to suit their interests.

The situation for the Union was especially dangerous because of Abraham Lincoln's total lack of diplomatic experience. He left matters largely in the hands of his Secretary of State, William Henry Seward, a self-important politician who viewed himself as the real power inside the White House. Perry's subject is therefore important, and his depth of knowledge and research is evident, but his book is badly let down by an inability to present the vast amount of information at his fingertips in an accessible manner. The narrative jumps around in a disorientating fashion, and the book is also riddled with errors (one event is referred to as taking place on 'May 32 1861').

This does not destroy the book entirely, but it makes it difficult to read and prevents absorption in the fascinating subject matter. The choice of photographs in the centre section is also uninspiring. In the case of Seward, especially, having been badly disfigured in a knife attack, a more dramatic picture could have been chosen, but the book has settled for a parade of dull portraits.




**"THE SITUATION FOR THE UNION WAS ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S TOTAL LACK OF DIPLOMATIC EXPERIENCE"**

# THE GERMAN WAR:

## A NATION UNDER ARMS, 1939–45

**Author:** Nicholas Stargardt **Publisher:** The Bodley Head **Price:** £30 **Released:** Out now

### FRESH PERSPECTIVES ON THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE OF WORLD WAR II

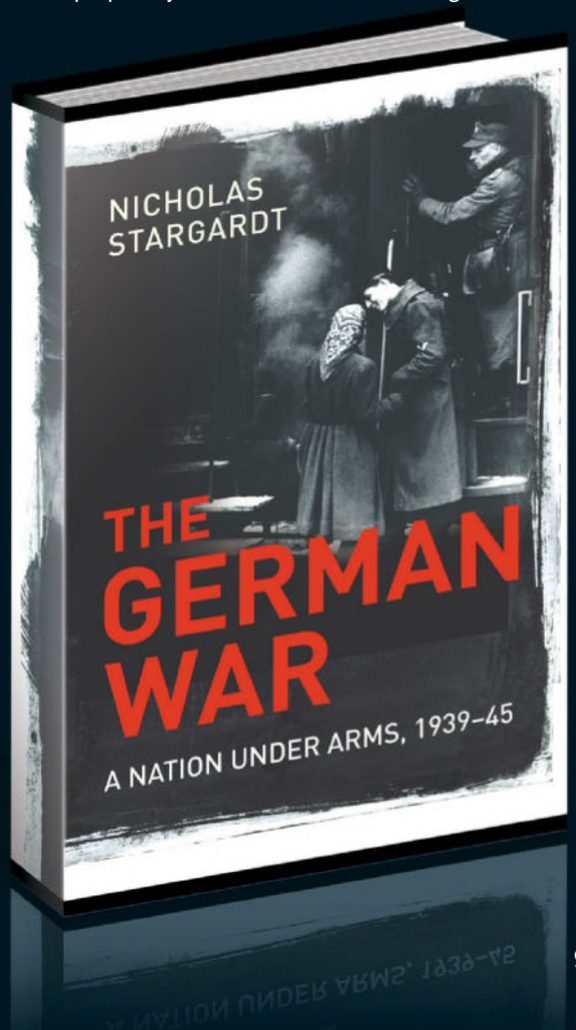
Few would now cling to the old propaganda story of a German nation united in its lust for war, but Oxford professor Nicholas Stargardt's compelling work reveals just how far removed it was from the truth.

The book jumps in with both feet at the start of mobilisation and presents us with a broad look at German society as a whole alongside penetrating insights into individual experiences. Soldiers, girlfriends left at home, farmers, the terrified husband of a Jewish wife – the snapshots are many and vivid.

Stargardt weaves the story of the war through these personal experiences, depicting a nation in a state of dread at the oncoming conflict. Matters deteriorated almost instantly for the common German citizen, with anxiety over food supplies turning them into a nation of food obsessives as early as October 1939. In the same way, precautionary air raid sirens in Berlin sent the populace scurrying for shelter, often covering their faces with wet towels in fear of a gas attack.

Stargardt also shows how the Germans were taught to view the war as the fault of the warmongering British and how 3 September 1939 (the day Britain and France declared war of Germany) was marked in their diaries as the start of the war. The familiar starting date for the rest of the world, 1 September, was simply a 'counterattack' after Polish aggression.

Stargardt's story, perhaps inevitably, is a tale of both tragic misunderstanding and cynical manipulation, and presents the German people as yet more victims of the Hitler regime.



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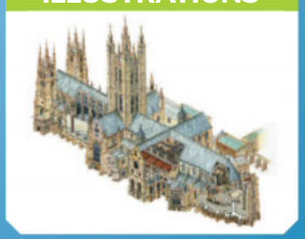
|  |  |  |  |  |

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HISTORY of WAR

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# FISHGUARD INVASION HORN

## This simple gunpowder holder was finely decorated to commemorate a failed French invasion of Britain

The last time foreign soldiers landed on British soil was during the French Revolutionary Wars in 1797. In fact, a triple French invasion of Britain was planned, with landings in Ireland, Newcastle and Wales but only the Welsh incursion came to fruition. On 22 February 1797, an Irish-American, Colonel William Tate, landed 1,400 French troops near Fishguard, Pembrokeshire with the aim of inspiring a Welsh revolution and marching on Bristol.

However, the French pillaged local farms and the angry Welsh rose up with the British, assembling an improvised force of volunteers, reservists and sailors. Over two days there were skirmishes around Fishguard as the French occupied strong positions on rocky outcrops, but their soldiers were becoming drunk and disorderly. Eventually, the ragtag British force of 700 surrounded the French and bluffed the invaders into unconditionally surrendering by claiming they had superior numbers. The French believed the lie and laid down their weapons. 33 Frenchmen had been killed and 1,360 were taken prisoner, with only light British losses.

Although it was a minor affair, the Fishguard Invasion rattled the British establishment, who were terrified of revolutionary violence and consequently the French defeat was widely celebrated. This powder horn belonged to a Welsh soldier of the Castlemartin Yeomanry, which was one of the volunteer militia units that helped to defeat the French. It is made of bone and would have been used to hold gunpowder for musketry but it was subsequently elaborately carved to celebrate the victory. The somewhat exaggerated inscription states, "To commemorate the glorious defeat of the French. February 1797."

**"THE FISHGUARD INVASION RATTLED THE BRITISH ESTABLISHMENT, WHO WERE TERRIFIED OF REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AND CONSEQUENTLY THE FRENCH DEFEAT WAS WIDELY CELEBRATED"**


***Above:** The horn can be seen as part of the collection of the Cardiff Castle Museum of the Welsh Soldier, Wales. For more information visit:* www.cardiffcastlemuseum.org.uk

***Far left:** The French botched their invasion of Wales by pillaging Welsh homesteads and drinking excessively, immediately alienating the local population*

*Image: Cardiff Castle Museum of the Welsh Soldier*

# Britain Napoleonic

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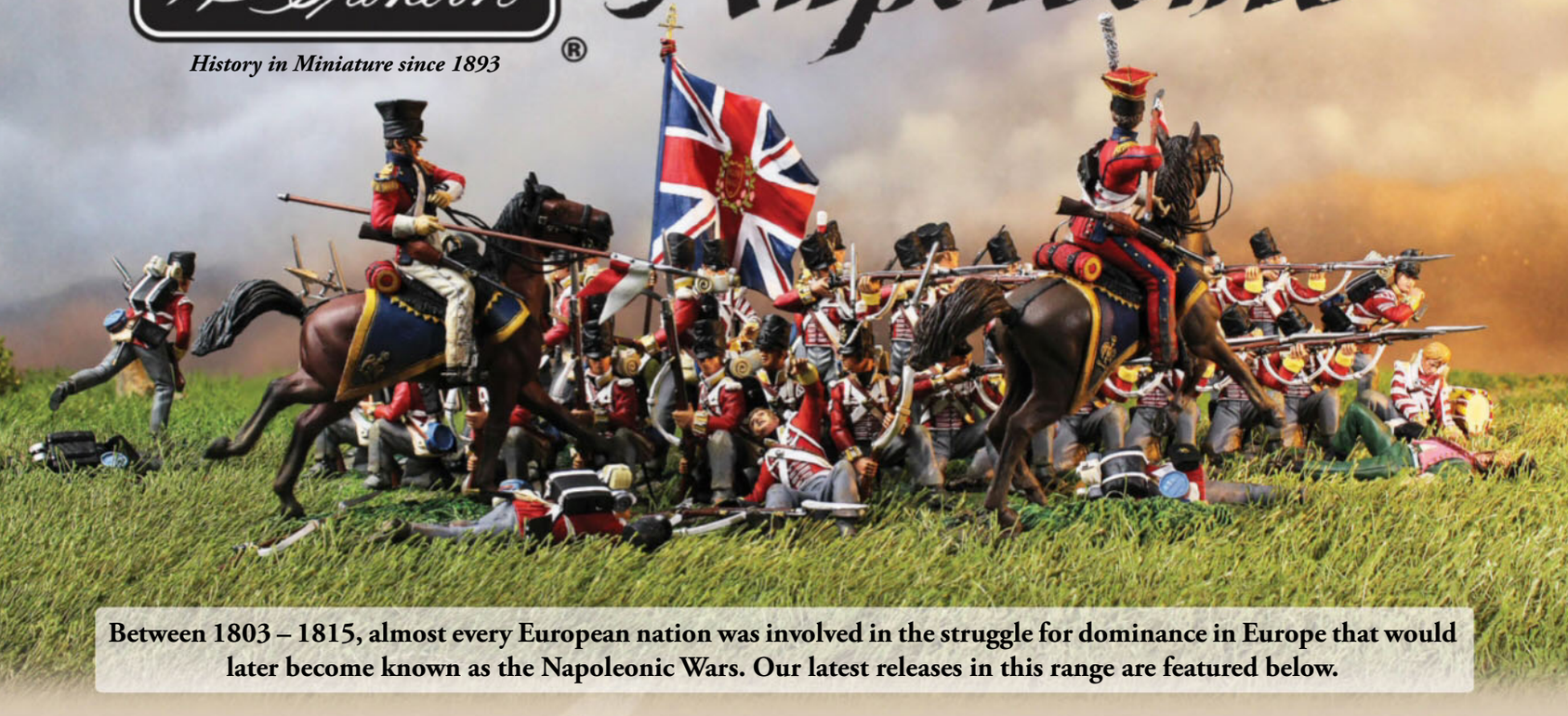

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